

POLICY ISSUE INFORMATION

January 23, 2007

SECY-07-0017

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: Luis A. Reyes
Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP ON THE BUREAU OF THE
NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY RADIOACTIVE WASTE
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PURPOSE:

To inform the Commission of a planned change in the United States membership on the Bureau of the Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). This paper does not address any new commitments nor resource implications.

DISCUSSION:

The RWMC is one of the NEA standing technical committees. The goal of the RWMC, as reflected in the NEA Strategic Plan, is as follows:

“To assist member countries in the area of management of radioactive waste and materials, focusing on the development of strategies for the safe, sustainable and broadly acceptable management of all types of radioactive waste, in particular long-lived waste, and spent fuel.”

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Additional background regarding the RWMC activities to achieve this goal, are included in the enclosure. Because of the value to the United States, of RWMC work, managers from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) participate in the RWMC, as NRC managers do in other NEA standing technical committees. For example, Jim Dyer, Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, serves on the Bureau of the NEA Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities. The previous U.S. representative on the RWMC Bureau was Margaret Federline. Bob Bernero, previous Director of the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, also served in a leadership capacity on the RWMC.

A number of changes are occurring in the RWMC Bureau. For example, a new Chairman, from Germany, was elected at the last meeting (in March 2006), but was not able to continue serving in his position because of changes in his responsibilities in Germany. Margaret Federline, the previous chairperson, was asked to fill this role until a new Chairman can be elected in March 2007. Also, the Canadian Bureau member is stepping down because of Canadian government changes. In addition, a new Japanese Bureau member began his term in 2006.

Because of the status of the high-level waste regulatory program in this country, NEA has expressed interest in the United States continuing to serve on the RWMC Bureau. Both DOE and EPA have encouraged NRC to continue to represent the U.S. on the RWMC Bureau. DOE plans to continue serving as head of the U.S. delegation at the RWMC annual meetings and EPA plans to continue participating in these meetings, as well. NRC's continued membership on the RWMC Bureau involves, according to what has been the case previously, preparation for and participation in, two Bureau meetings each year (where one of the Bureau meetings coincides with the annual RWMC meeting).

At a meeting of the RWMC Bureau at NRC Headquarters during the week of December 15, 2006, the NEA Secretariat was informed, subject to internal NRC approvals, that the proposed next U.S. representative on the RWMC Bureau will be Jack Strosnider, Director of the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards. Mr. Strosnider has a broad knowledge of the NRC and U.S. radioactive waste management programs, and well understands the NEA organizational structure and its methods of work, since he was a member of the NEA Secretariat for two years. The Office of the Executive Director for Operations supports the nomination of Mr. Strosnider as the next U.S. representative on the RWMC Bureau.

COORDINATION:

The Office of International Programs concurs in this paper. The Office of the General Counsel has reviewed this paper and has no legal objection.

/RA/

Luis A. Reyes
Executive Director
for Operations

Enclosure:
"Roles of the RWMC
and the RWMC Bureau"

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ROLES OF THE RWMC AND THE RWMC BUREAU

The Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) is one of the standing technical committees of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). The goal of the RWMC, as reflected in the NEA Strategic Plan, is as follows:

“To assist member countries in the area of management of radioactive waste and materials, focusing on the development of strategies for the safe, sustainable and broadly acceptable management of all types of radioactive waste, in particular long-lived waste, and spent fuel.”

The means used to achieve the RWMC goal, as described in the NEA Strategic Plan, are identified below.

Bring about a shared and broad-based understanding on the management of radioactive waste and materials, particularly in the long-lived waste area by:

- Providing multi-disciplinary fora for exchanging information and experience and for promoting an open dialogue amongst waste management implementers, regulators, policy specialists at government level, research and development specialists, and stakeholders;
- Issuing collective opinions on topical issues; and
- Preparing documents and databases on national waste management frameworks and approaches for technical specialists, as well as decision makers, opinion formers, and stakeholders.

Facilitate the elaboration of waste management strategies at national and international level by:

- Reviewing strategies adopted by Member Countries, with a view to identifying and analyzing emerging technical and policy issues, and improving understanding and consensus;
- Organizing peer reviews of national programs for such activities as research and development, and performance assessment, as requested;
- Examining and improving approaches for performing long-term safety analyses and for documenting safety cases;
- Examining criteria for stepwise decision-making;
- Preparing good-practice documents; and
- Liaisoning with other relevant, international institutions.

Enclosure

Help elaborate common regulatory approaches in the management of radioactive waste by:

- Identifying and analyzing emerging regulatory issues associated with the waste management strategies of Member Countries;
- Promoting the dialogue between waste management implementers and regulators, to identify and address future regulatory challenges and integrate technical and non-technical approaches; and
- Reviewing regulatory bases, requirements and criteria, and licensing processes with a view to supporting regulatory approaches.

Enable the management of radioactive waste and materials to benefit from progress of scientific and technical knowledge by:

- Reviewing the state of the art of scientific and technical bases of geological disposal concepts and decommissioning technology for nuclear facilities, with a view to identifying areas where additional efforts are required;
- Promoting co-operative efforts to compile internationally applicable data and information, and benchmarking exercises;
- Promoting joint technical initiatives in support of repository development and decommissioning technologies;
- Promoting initiatives to maintain relevant competencies, as well as the accumulated knowledge, within organizations, during the execution of long-term waste management and decommissioning projects; and
- Promoting initiatives to transfer current waste management and decommissioning knowledge to future nuclear systems, including new fuel cycles.

The role of the RWMC Bureau is:

- To provide guidance to the Secretariat and the RWMC working parties on issues that may arise between regular RWMC meetings;
- To recommend, to the RWMC, solutions to issues raised by the RWMC working parties; and
- To facilitate the exchange of information between the RWMC and the RWMC working parties.

The RWMC Bureau consists of five members representing the balance of the RWMC membership. Thus, over time, the average composition of the Bureau is of two representatives from waste management agencies, two representatives from regulatory authorities, and one representative from a government policy body.

The RWMC Bureau helps prepare the agenda of the RWMC plenary meetings and the decision basis regarding the initiatives of the committee. The Bureau members are in frequent contact with the Secretariat and, in their meetings, involve, as appropriate, the Chairmen of the working parties and task groups under RWMC. Furthermore, nominated members of the RWMC Bureau may follow specific initiatives, working groups, etc., in detail, to ensure that findings are properly communicated within the Bureau, and to the RWMC.

The Bureau members are elected from the members of the RWMC. To preserve continuity of the RWMC program and, at the same time contribute new expertise in the leadership of the RWMC, the Bureau members generally serve one or two terms of three to four years.