



RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

Both federal and nonfederal sites for the disposal of radioactive waste reside within the boundaries of one or more states. In dealing with the issue of radioactive waste management, the Governors, along with local and federal officials, must protect the public health and safety and the environment.

The radioactive wastes which have accumulated from military activities, commercial reactors, medical research and other sources constitute a national responsibility. All states generating any part of the problem need to participate in its resolution. The waste management problem cannot be solved by a federal process alone. It must be based on the principles of cooperative federalism. A strong partnership of federal, state and local government and private industry is essential to a successful program. That partnership must be continued and strengthened. Continued dialogue on details of program plans is also essential to developing a sound program that will ensure public confidence.

The Governors urge Congress and the President to create a joint commission on radioactive waste management consisting of seven members, a majority of which are drawn from the States. The commission should have the responsibility for developing a comprehensive radioactive-waste disposal policy and implementation plan, in conjunction with states, federal agencies and local governments. Other responsibilities of the commission should include oversight of the development of generic environmental impact statements (GEIS) on the final disposal of commercial waste; investigation of the feasibility of establishing public-private waste management corporations, initially federally financed, on a site-specific basis; and development of recommendations for away-from-reactor (AFR) spent-fuel storage. Such programs should move forward on an accelerated basis.

The Department of Energy should become more aware of, and sensitive to, the potential social, economic and political impacts of waste management plans and programs on existing institutions. Greater attention should be given to the arrangements needed to offset or ameliorate those impacts. To that end, the Department of Energy needs to develop more effective methods to obtain timely, informed and responsible public participation in formulating these policies and programs. Early in the process of preparing environmental impact statements for specific sites or facilities, the Department of Energy should involve state and local officials. State and local officials should assist with furnishing the information needed for these activities. DOE must obtain state concurrence prior to final site determinations. In addition, significant DOE management attention must be redirected to the analysis of environmental impact statements for radioactive waste management. Schedules must be accelerated and additional competent technical personnel must be assigned to this task.

Although ultimate disposal of high-level defense and commercially generated wastes must occupy the highest priority, the Governors recognize that interim solutions for the management of spent-fuel will be necessary in order to continue using present nuclear capacity.