CONF-800607--27

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LOW-LEVEL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Purpose

The Department of Energy has taken the Interagency Review Group Report as a basis for developing and implementing the low-level waste management program. DOE is developing a national plan for low-level waste management. This plan will describe the process necessary to achieve safe management of low-level wastes.

Report

DOE was charged with developing the national plan for the management of low-level waste. Such a plan must deal with the national issues and the total responses needed. The national plan should not be restricted to technical issues and solutions, but should address all germaine issues.

In order to gain a broad perspective, it was decided that many individuals with diverse backgrounds and opinions would be involved in the development of the strategy. Formal and informal input was sought.

An outline was prepared to initiate the strategy development process. Outside input and comments were solicited and the outline revised. This revised outline became the basis for further discussion.

The actual development of the strategy was performed by a Task Force. Members of the Task Force were selected from a wide spectrum of interests. Only two members, myself and the Oak Ridge Program Manager, had direct association with DOE. The other members were associated with other federal agencies, states, universities, and groups skeptical about nuclear powers. Members were expected to represent themselves and in no way represent the organization, state or federal agencies.

The issues were defined during a series of meetings. Possible options for resolving the issues were identified. A preferred option was selected. The document describing the strategy was prepared by EG&G Idaho, Inc. and subcontractors.

DISCLAIMER

The Task Force was not constrained concerning the issues or alternative responses. The modus operandi was to divide into four subgroups, each focused on a particular area or issue. Each subgroup would then report to the entire body. The recommendations of the subgroup were discussed until a consensus was achieved.

Two major issues raised by the Task Force were the credibility of DOE and the lack of sufficient public acceptance. It was generally felt that these issues were related and have their genesis in past AEC or ERDA or DOE activities. All the members and DOE observers present considered these to be valid issues with a basis in fact.

The recommended actions for responding to these issues included a vigorous communication effort by DOE and its contractors. Specific recommendations included periodic meetings with state officials from every state, meetings with local officials and special interest groups and meetings with media representatives. Continued involvement of the Task Force and a general information exchange system were two other recommendations.

The remainder of the strategy will be summarized.

Summary

The DOE strategy recognizes that public perception of low-level waste management practices is not positive. Actions are included that are aimed at opening the system to the public. A better informed public will be able to better assess the performance of the low-level waste management system.