

Ringling in the New Year

Oh my gosh! It's 2004 already! Where has the time gone? We can't possibly be this far into the 21st century. Tell me, did we ever solve that pesky Y2K problem?

But if it's really 2004, then a lot of things will be happening this year. The U.S. Department of Energy is supposed to submit a license application for a high-level waste repository at Yucca Mountain by the end of December. There are some who say the DOE will never make the deadline, but the DOE claims to be right on schedule. Despite the best workings of the Nevada senators, the program's budget appropriation for fiscal 2004 is almost at the request level, which should help the DOE meet the deadline.

And if it's 2004, then Nevada must be continuing its stalwart efforts to upend the repository project. I see by some clippings that have stacked up on my desk that Nevada is expressing new concerns—or maybe just repeating old concerns—about criticality accidents in the repository, about hidden volcanoes around the Yucca Mountain area, and about military aircraft accidents in the region.

If it's 2004, then that means the Barnwell low-level waste disposal facility will be open to all U.S. waste generators only four and a half more years—until June 30, 2008. Not much time left to do something about lack of LLW disposal capacity.

If it's 2004, then many of the DOE's cleanup projects are rapidly and successfully approaching the end of their mission. Several sites, includ-

ing Rocky Flats, Fernald, and Mound, plan to finish remediation work by the end of 2006. Only three more years of work ahead on some cleanup projects that, years ago, people estimated would take decades—if not centuries. Just shows what dedication, the right staffing, and adequate funding can do.

If it's 2004, several commercial nuclear power plant decommissioning projects are moving closer to completion—with (thankfully) little prospect of *new* work of this sort looming ahead. In 2003 we saw several reactor vessels shipped to Barnwell, and the San Onofre vessel should make it around the Horn and up to Barnwell this year.

If it's 2004, then several more operating reactors are going to be sold and bought, and many more will apply for license extension. That means more operating waste to manage and more spent fuel to be disposed of down the road.

On a more personal level, if it's 2004, then I've been serving as editor of *Radwaste Solutions* for more than five years. Now *that* I really find hard to believe. Creating each issue feels fresh and new, as if I'm doing it for the very first time—except, of course, that I've learned so much about the world of nuclear waste management and facility decommissioning and remediation during these five-plus years. I hope I never stop learning.

So, here's to you, 2004! Here's hoping the year brings progress and resolution on a lot of fronts—those



*Looking
Forward
While Being
Forward
Looking*

mentioned above and many others as well. And here's to you, faithful reader! The magazine staff wishes you a fruitful year, with progress and success and happiness thrown in for good measure.—Nancy J. Zacha, Editor ■