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Coming Attractions

So here we are, on the cusp of 2008. What can we expect for the coming year? Well, there's a lot going on in the nuclear waste world in particular and in the greater nuclear industry world as well.

On the plus side, in 2008 we should see the submittal of the license application (LA) for the Yucca Mountain high-level waste/spent nuclear fuel repository. Ward Sproat, the director of the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, has staked his professional reputation on the submittal of the LA to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission by June 30, 2008. If it happens, it will be a major step forward for the nation's repository program, one that will move the NRC into the starring role in the 25-year-old drama.

June 30, 2008, however, is a meaningful date for another, less pleasant, reason. On that date, barring some last-minute legislative action, the Barnwell, S.C., low-level waste disposal facility will close to waste generators from outside the Atlantic Compact states. After that, U.S. LLW generators from 36 states and the District of Columbia will have nowhere to send Class B and C LLW. This could have a major impact on the nation's research and commerce. Ironically, the nation's nuclear power plants, the largest generators of Class B and C waste, may be the least affected by the closure, as many of them have enough room onsite to begin storing their B and C waste. Medical centers, pharmaceutical companies, universities, non-nuclear companies, and research institutions, on the other hand, which generate

less LLW, also have less space available in which to store their waste.

For 2008, the DOE can be expected to spend another \$5 billion-plus in its continuing efforts to clean up its legacy waste sites, most notably at Hanford, Idaho, Oak Ridge, and Savannah River. The DOE hopes to send 25 shipments weekly of contact-handled transuranic (TRU) waste and 6 shipments weekly of the higher-activity remote-handled TRU waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. Cleanup at many sites depends on removal of the TRU waste, and this ambitious schedule should help cleanup progress at many DOE sites.

For the nuclear industry as a whole, in 2008 we can expect to see more applications for combined construction and operating licenses (COLs) for new nuclear power plants being filed with the NRC. NRG Energy Inc. started the ball rolling at the end of September with their COL application for two new nuclear units at the South Texas Project nuclear power plant site. The total capacity of the two new units should equal or exceed 2700 MWe.

Interestingly, NRG's chief executive stated that the company does not intend to rely on any national repository for disposal of its spent fuel, in the short term at any rate. The new units will plan to store a lifetime output of spent fuel onsite, at a dry storage facility.

Finally, at the end of 2008 (on the first Tuesday of November), the United States will elect a new president. As we have learned over the years, presidential administrations can have a great deal of impact on the nation's nuclear waste programs, and the



What Lies Ahead in 2008, for Better and for Worse

2008 election is probably going to be particularly important in this regard.

And throughout 2008, as it has in the past, *Radwaste Solutions* will continue to bring you reports on cleanup projects around the country and around the globe, and will also keep you abreast of the latest news and business developments in the radwaste world.—Nancy J. Zacha, *Editor*