

Odds and Ends

In this issue of the magazine, rather than tackle a single subject, I thought I might opine on a few different topics that have been dogging my brain lately.

The Aftermath of Terror

First, we at *Radwaste Solutions* extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Words really cannot express our sorrow and shock at these heinous crimes.

In the wake of the attacks, it has sometimes been hard to find value in our ordinary lives and in the work that we do. But those of us laboring in the field of nuclear waste management and cleanup know that we are doing important work that will increase the nation's safety and livability. Now more than ever, it is urgent that our work be fully funded and continue on schedule, since every cleanup goal we meet contributes to national security and well being.

Cleanup Standards

In this issue, we provide two examples of New England states weighing in on nuclear power plant decommissioning standards. In one case, outlined in "Getting It Right," by Bruce J. Musico and Harold T. Judd (page 21), we see how New Hampshire has chosen to deal with regulating nuclear power plant decommissioning—primarily by endorsing the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's radiological cleanup standards. In contrast, in the "Headlines" section (page 6) the news item on the Maine Yankee agreement with the state of Maine and local environmental activists reports that Maine has chosen to go with a more restrictive standard.

Maine's demands for stricter cleanup standards are disturbing to the long-term outlook for nuclear viability in this nation. In this era of large companies operating power plants in several regions and states, a single standard for decommissioning makes it easier to carry over lessons learned

from one project to the next. And certainly cleanup standards will be something utilities and operating companies look at as they ponder the need for new electricity generating plants and consider the energy sources—including nuclear—for those plants.

Learning Experiences

In my last editorial (*Radwaste Solutions*, Sept/Oct. 2001, page 4), I discussed how much I learn at the conferences I attend. A case in point: this year's ANS executive conference on power plant D&D (this issue, page 40). The organizers of this year's conference had large shoes to fill, trying to match the success of the first such conference, held two years ago near Big Rock Point in northern Michigan. They succeeded. With two power plant tours and two full days of sessions, the meeting was a prime example of how much information can be shared in just a few short days when the right people participate.

Sound Science

I don't know about you, but I cringe when I hear a politician using the term "sound science." As in, "We are not going to commit to such-and-such for purely political reasons; rather, we will use only *sound science* as the basis of our decision."

What they are really saying is, "We are going to proceed based on our ideological outlook, and we will then find some kind of science to support it."

Both liberals and conservatives—and all ideologues in between—are guilty. All cry for *sound science* as they try to sell a particular action or agenda. What's ironic is that when an independent agency such as the National Academy of Sciences issues a report or finding that actually *is* based on sound science, it's immediately attacked and accused of political bias—as if the accusers had no biases of their own. It must be very frustrating to anyone trying to make decisions in an arena where scientific data and opinion are crucial.—Nancy J. Zacha, Editor



What's on My Mind