

INSIDE LOOK

News about Private Fuel Storage, Tooele County, Utah



SEISMIC STUDIES REVEAL PFS SITE IS SAFE FOR STORAGE

After an exhaustive nine-month study of subsurface conditions in the vicinity of its proposed spent-fuel-rod storage facility in Skull Valley, Private Fuel Storage (PFS) remains convinced that seismic conditions are not a red flag for the facility.

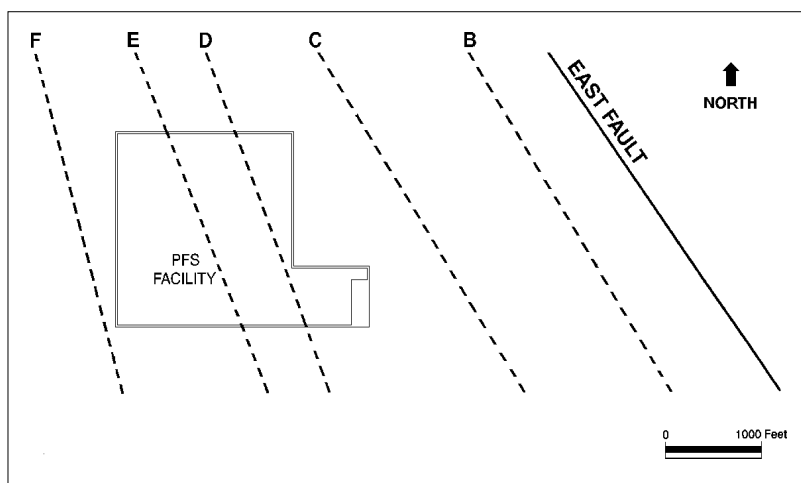
The data, which confirm the existence of faults under and near the site and provide additional details on those and other faults, have been submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the state of Utah and other interested parties. The study was conducted to gather more detailed information so that PFS could respond more comprehensively to questions raised by the NRC, the state and other licensing process participants.

"It should be no surprise to anyone living in the west that there are faults – signs of historic earthquake activity – almost everywhere," said Scott Northard, PFS project manager. "Whether you're building an office building or a facility like ours, the questions you must ask are 'Can these faults slip; what will happen if they do; and can we design our facility to withstand any credible earthquake?'"

"The enormous amount of data we have added supports our earlier conclusion that this site is safe and suitable for a temporary storage facility," said Northard. "It also confirms that we have designed our facility to withstand any credible earthquake scenario with very minimal risk to the facility itself, and no risk to the public."

The study identified a previously unknown fault – called Eastern Fault – about a half-mile east of the proposed site. It has the potential for slipping and causing an earthquake. The latest analysis considered the combined effects of both the Eastern Fault and the Stansbury Fault, and their

casks as much as 14 inches. The casks, which store the spent fuel, will not tip over in an earthquake, or any other credible event scenario. PFS then analyzed for this non-credible event and verified that the fuel rods would remain intact and well protected by the 2'-foot thick concrete casks and steel canisters that contain them.



In this diagram, faults B, C, D, E and F are localized and minor and pose no risk to the facility, which is designed to withstand any credible earthquake along other, more significant faults in the area.

relative degree of activity. The study determined that the resulting ground motions are consistent with the facility's seismic design. Minor faults under the proposed site were also identified, but they alone are incapable of causing an earthquake and pose little risk to the facility.

NRC regulations require an applicant to perform studies and analysis to provide "reasonable assurance" that the facility is designed to protect "all facility components important to safety."

Previous analysis performed by PFS showed that if a major earthquake occurred on the Stansbury Fault (7.0 on the Richter scale) it might tilt the 150-ton concrete storage

"The question we often hear from the public is 'couldn't the spent fuel explode and become airborne?'" said Northard. "The answer is 'no.' The stored fuel is in the form of hard ceramic pellets, packed tightly in long zirconium tubes in a dry environment within the thick steel canister. There is simply no credible way this material could become airborne."

The PFS study took several months of planning, beginning in spring 1998 followed by field research during summer and fall, then several months of analysis. The work was performed by independent, leading experts in geology, seismicity, and nuclear facilities.

The PFS seismic study is part of the public record and can be inspected at the public document room at the University of Utah's Marriott Library.

"This extensive research adds greatly to the body of knowledge about the geologic history, including seismicity, of the Great Basin region of Utah," said Don Currey, Professor of Geography at the University of Utah, who participated in parts of the study. "The fact that this material will be available to the public, including the academic community, will be of great benefit."

Governor Leavitt's Medieval Metaphor Get's 21st Century Response

When Gov. Mike Leavitt gave his State of the State address to the Legislature and a televised audience earlier this year, his political rhetoric took on a medieval twist with barbs aimed at the proposed Private Fuel Storage (PFS) project on the Skull Valley Band of Goshute reservation.

Gov. Leavitt referred to building "a moat around the Goshute island. The drawbridge will be raised to waste storage utilities and permission to cross refused . . ." the Governor said.

Keeping the Middle-Ages theme going, State Representative Eli Anderson, whose district includes the Skull Valley reservation, tweaked the Governor's proposal by saying that catapults should be used for getting important items over the moat. He went on to make a serious proposal to assist the Skull Valley Band with economic development.

However, response from PFS and Skull Valley Band officials to the Governor's remarks was decidedly 21st Century in nature.

"Governor Leavitt has already taken over the only road that leads to our reservation," said Leon Bear, chairman of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians. "Now he wants to prevent the construction of a railroad line to the reservation, and he wants to totally isolate us with a moat around our land. His aim is clearly to prevent the siting of a business that we are trying to develop – one that will provide jobs and other opportunities for my people well into the next century.

"However, he is, in effect, also shutting off options for any other business venture on our reservation," Chairman Bear said. "He is sending a very discouraging message to prospective business partners – 'You can't do business with the Goshutes unless the Governor approves.' This is not only blatantly racist, it is a violation of our federal treaty agreement which prevents outside parties, including states, from violating our sovereign rights."

"The Governor...preaches the principles of Enlibra...while refusing to practice them in his own backyard."

-Leon Bear, Chairman, Skull Valley Band of Goshutes

PFS Project Manager Scott Northard pointed out that PFS and the Skull Valley Band were following all applicable laws and regulations in the effort to obtain a license to build and operate the PFS facility. "The Governor now wants to step in and change the rules so that the state, not the sovereign tribe, not the federal government, which has jurisdiction in such matters, has the final say."

Referring to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's rigorous licensing process, Mr. Northard said, "The state already is taking full advantage of its right to participate in the licensing of the proposed PFS facility, and I believe this is appropriate. It is asking all the tough questions it can think of to challenge the safety of the facility. Those questions must be answered to the satisfaction of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board or the

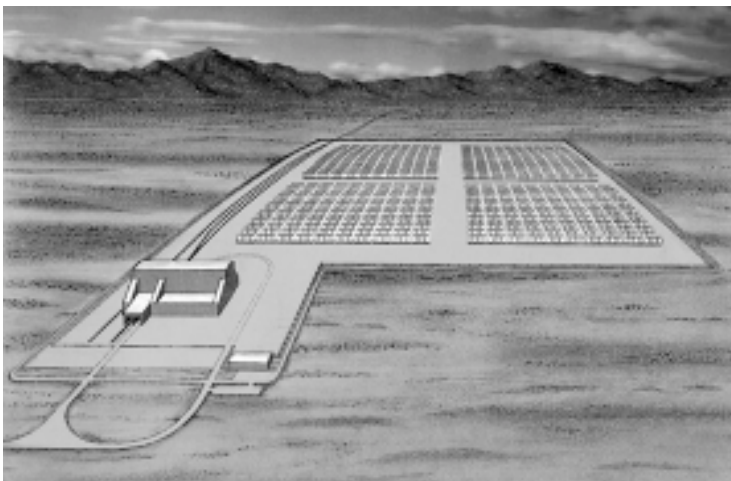


Leon Bear

facility won't be built. We wouldn't have it any other way."

Both Chairman Bear and Mr. Northard noted that the Governor's stance on the PFS project runs counter to the tenets of his own Enlibra policy.

"The Governor's remarks are hypocritical," said Chairman Bear. "He preaches the principles of Enlibra throughout the rest of the country, while refusing to practice them in his own backyard. He is not willing to let the scientific consideration of this facility guide state policy. He tries to assert state control of the issue, rather than allowing local government and our sovereign nation to make decisions. And his political rhetoric is designed to polarize public opinion, not enlighten and inform. His 'over-my-dead-body' approach to our proposal doesn't bring to mind a balancing of the interests of those affected."



This illustration is a composite drawing of what the site is expected to look like upon completion. There will be up to 4,000 casks stored at the site, which will occupy 820 acres of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Reservation.

Where We Are In The Licensing Process

If all the steps leading to a decision to grant a license to the PFS facility take about four years, then we must be about half way there. If you haven't been paying close attention, here's a quick review of where we've been and a look ahead at milestones to come.

1997

- ◆ PFS submitted its application, which was accepted by the NRC.
- ◆ NRC named a three-member Atomic Safety and Licensing Board to oversee the hearing process.
- ◆ The State of Utah, Confederated Tribe of Goshutes, Castle Rock and associated land owners, and Ohnga Gaudedeh Divia asked the NRC for standing to participate in the licensing process.

1998

- ◆ The NRC granted standing to the groups named above, and decided which issues (contentions) can be heard in upcoming hearings.
- ◆ Participants began to prepare for hearings.
- ◆ The NRC held its first public meeting about the scope of the environmental impact study.
- ◆ PFS prepared to answer additional questions from the NRC, one of which involved additional field studies related to earthquakes and potential impacts.
- ◆ Castle Rock dropped its intervention after reaching an agreement with PFS.
- ◆ The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance petitioned the NRC to participate in the licensing. Permission was granted.

1999

- ◆ PFS sent reports to the NRC detailing the additional data collected, which confirmed its conclusion that the facility is designed to withstand any credible earthquake.
- ◆ NRC, BLM, and BIA held more scoping meetings to seek public input on environmental issues related to the proposed rail line.

Still to come...

- ◆ The first round of public hearings will be held in Salt Lake City in late 1999.
- ◆ Draft Safety Evaluation Report (SER) to be issued by NRC in October 1999.

2000

- ◆ The draft EIS is expected to be issued in March; public comment will be invited.
- ◆ Another round of public hearings will be held in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ Final SER scheduled to be issued in September.

2001

- ◆ The final EIS is expected to be issued in February.
- ◆ A final round of hearings will be held.
- ◆ The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will make a decision.
- ◆ The BLM will decide whether to permit the rail line.
- ◆ The BIA will decide whether to give final approval of the Goshute lease.
- ◆ Hiring and construction could begin.

2002

- ◆ Construction completed.
- ◆ Facility could open in late 2002.

Government Agencies Listen, Invite Comments on Rail Line

Representatives of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs were in town April 29 to gather input on the scope of the environmental impact assessment of the rail line that PFS proposes to build along the west side of Skull Valley.

The NRC is responsible for completing the environmental impact statement (EIS), but the BLM must make its decision whether or not to allow the rail line on public lands based on the EIS. The BIA's final approval of the lease, which the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes has signed with PFS, is also dependent on the conclusions of the EIS.

Two meetings, one in Salt Lake City and the other in Tooele, gave members of the public, as well as state representatives, an opportunity to suggest issues that should be included in the environmental review. The issues expressed included the potential for brush fires sparked by the train, the possibility of an earthquake derailing the train, the impact of the railroad on wildlife in the area, and the possible disturbance to historic trails through the valley.

Several speakers, including two Utah scientists, expressed opinions that environmental impacts would be insignificant due to the exceptionally safe track record for transporting spent fuel rods over the past 30 years. One encouraged the government agencies to base their decisions on scientific facts rather than irrational fears, which frequently influence public attitudes about nuclear energy.

The draft EIS, which will be available for public review and comment, is expected to be issued in March 2000.

Learn more about the project

For more information about nuclear power, spent nuclear fuel and the storage of spent nuclear fuel, visit these web sites:

www.skullvalleygoshutes.org, or
www.privatefuelstorage.com.

You may also call the PFS comment line: **1-888-701-8585**.

Or write to:

Private Fuel Storage
P.O. Box 1405
Salt Lake City, Utah 84110-1405

People Are Asking... "Why not leave it where it is?"

Governor Leavitt and other Utahns frequently ask why not leave the spent fuel where it is until a permanent repository is completed. The simple answer is that it is not practicable or possible to leave the spent fuel at some of the 105 nuclear reactor sites around the country. But it's really much more complicated than that. Consider these facts:

- The federal government (Department of Energy) has the legal responsibility to take commercial reactor spent fuel to a permanent repository.
- Federal law required DOE to be ready to begin taking spent fuel on Jan. 31, 1998.
- The federal government now says it will be 2010 at the earliest before a permanent repository is ready.
- The utility companies have been paying into a fund, which now totals more than \$15 billion, to pay for development of a permanent repository.
- Until DOE is ready to take the spent

fuel the utility companies have few choices:

- Build more storage at their reactor sites. This is not always possible due to space constraints. In some instances state laws prohibit expansion of on-site storage. In other instances, where plants have shut down, the spent fuel must be removed before the site can be decommissioned.
- Shut down the reactor. This is costly and could disrupt service to customers. But it would still leave fuel on-site and block decommissioning.
- Plan for off-site storage at a centralized facility like the one PFS is proposing. Although it takes time and money to go through the licensing process, this is the best option for some companies.
- Meanwhile, ten utility companies have filed lawsuits against DOE to force the government to pay damages for failing to meet the 1998 deadline.

- So far, 18 reactors have run out of space in fuel pools. By 2010, 80 reactors will be out of space.

It's easy to say that this is not Utah's problem. But it is a dilemma that affects all of us. If utility companies must shut down nuclear reactors, and depend more on coal or oil for power generation, emissions will increase, affecting the air we breathe, and increasing greenhouse gasses and global warming. Furthermore, increased costs in power generation will be passed on to customers, eventually affecting the cost of goods and materials we purchase – even here in Utah.

The cooling pools at nuclear reactors were not designed to store spent fuel indefinitely. Dry cask storage, such as that proposed for Skull Valley, is a safer way to store the spent fuel until a permanent repository is ready. Safety of our nuclear plants and our environment should be a concern of all of us – even here in Utah.

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