

Summer 2001

# INSIDE LOOK

News about Private Fuel Storage, Tooele County, Utah



## Goshutes and PFS Fight for Rights of All Businesses

On April 19, 2001, the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians and Private Fuel Storage (PFS) filed a complaint in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City challenging the constitutionality of six Utah laws that aim to prevent the licensing and operation of a temporary facility to store spent nuclear fuel on the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation. The lawsuit alleges the state laws are unconstitutional and are preempted by federal law.

One of the laws, Senate Bill 81, enacted in 2001, would make it illegal for individuals, businesses or local governments to provide goods or services to PFS.

"I'm trying to figure out if this is still the United States, where legitimate businesses can operate under the protection of the law," said Scott Northard, project manager for PFS. "This is a violation of the freedom of association protected by the First Amendment, and we expect the court

will agree.

"Where we already have contracts with suppliers of goods or services, Senate Bill 81 purports to void those contracts, a violation of the Contracts Clause of the Constitution," Northard said.

The Legislature passed the law claiming it was necessary to protect the health and safety of the public. However, the ongoing, rigorous licensing process is the established, legal determinant of safety for such a project. That process will not be completed until April 2002. So far, the proposed PFS facility has received a favorable Safety Evaluation Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which has the regulatory authority for such facilities. However, there are still a number of issues to be argued in hearings late this year. The State will have the opportunity to bring any evidence it has that the facility could

not be operated safely, and PFS will have to respond.

If licensed, PFS would construct and operate a 100-acre temporary facility to store spent nuclear fuel in above-ground concrete and steel casks on the Skull Valley Goshute Indian Reservation. PFS would begin shipping fuel from its facility to a federal permanent repository as soon as one is ready. The PFS license would be for 20 years, with a possible 20-year renewal.

The total budget, if the facility operated 40 years, would be about \$3.1 billion, much of which would be spent for goods and services in Utah. The specialized fabrication and assembly of the stainless steel storage canisters and thick steel transportation casks would amount to about a third of the total budget – more than \$1 billion – and could prepare a local fabricator to bid on other specialized nuclear industry or government nuclear work.

### Bring Questions and Comments to the Fair!

For the fourth year in a row, PFS will have an information booth at the Tooele and Salt Lake County Fairs. The Fairs give PFS representatives an opportunity to speak with people one-on-one about the proposed facility and to provide information about safety, transportation, the licensing process, job possibilities, and other issues of interest. The Tooele County Fair will be held August 1-4 at the Deseret Peak Complex, and the Salt Lake County Fair will be August 15-18 at the Salt Lake County Fair Grounds in South Jordan.

PFS will also be represented this year for the first time at the West Valley City Native American Pow Wow, August 24-26, at Granger Park. The kiosk display will not only provide information about the proposed PFS facility, but also the history and culture of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians.

# Transportation of Spent Fuel – Planning for Accidents

Accidents can happen. Especially in the field of transportation. That's why those who regulate and plan shipments of highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel must assume accidents will happen and take extra precautions to protect the public.

With more than 3,000 shipments over the past 30 years, and no deaths, injuries or environmental damage due to radiation, the safety record of spent fuel shipments speaks for itself. The exemplary record can be attributed to the design and construction of the shipping containers and to the regulations governing oversight and coordination of the transportation itself.

Spent nuclear fuel is in the form of hard ceramic pellets, each about 1/2-inch long and about the same diameter as a pencil. These are contained within metal rods, themselves enclosed in sealed, welded-shut, helium-filled stainless steel canisters. Each canister is in turn contained in a heavy, sealed transportation cask.

Each of these elements provides a separate, independently sealed, protective boundary against the escape of radioactivity. In particular, the sealed transportation cask – constructed with 13-inch side walls of heavy steel and neutron-shielding material – is designed to shield the radiation and contain the radioactive material in the unlikely event that radioactive matter were to escape the sealed canister inside the cask.

The U.S. Department of Energy calculated that the maximum radiation exposure for someone living within 100 to 2,500 feet of a transportation route, assuming 100 passing shipments a year, would be less than one fifth of

the radiation exposure people receive during a jet flight across the country.

“The dose of cosmic radiation you receive flying at high altitudes across the country is lower than a chest x-ray,” said Scott Northard, PFS project manager. “Yet, both are safe and not something we need to be concerned about. Radiation exposure from the safe, regulated transportation of spent fuel is even less of a worry.”

The shipping casks are designed with accidents in mind. They must be able to withstand drops, impacts, fires, and submersion in water. In fact, they are designed much like the “black box” on an airplane, which has crushable ends to absorb the force of an impact and protect the contents. In a crash, the rest of the airplane may be destroyed, but the black box protects the recording devices that help investigators determine exactly what happened prior to the crash.

Similarly, spent fuel transportation casks will absorb the impact of a crash and ensure that even in a severe accident the contents will not be damaged or spilled. Although opponents to the PFS facility have hypothesized that a severe accident in an urban area could cost more than \$300 billion to clean up, the probability of that type of accident over the entire PFS project is less than one in a billion. That's less likely than the Earth being struck by a large meteor in the next 40 years.

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations also ensure public safety by setting standards for coordination of shipments and emergency response among shippers, carriers, state, local and federal agencies.

“PFS intends to exceed regulatory requirements,” said Northard. “We want to do all we can to address public concerns and ensure our shipments will be safe.”

Although not required by law, PFS will operate “dedicated trains,” that is, trains that carry no other cargo but the spent fuel. Special rail cars, specifically designed for the heavy spent fuel containers, are being manufactured and will be tested at the rail industry's Colorado test facility. PFS will develop a detailed transportation plan that will be coordinated with states and all federal agencies. Each shipment will be accompanied by tight security, as well as radiological experts who will monitor the cargo and ensure that emergency workers and the public remain at a safe distance in the event of an accident.

States have access to training experts and materials prepared by the U.S. Department of Energy and some states are already conducting classes for emergency response personnel in preparation for government shipments of spent fuel through their states.

The charge that transporting spent nuclear fuel will affect property values along transportation routes has no basis in fact. “This is a scare tactic being used by anti-nuclear activists, based on public opinion surveys that show people perceive risk in radioactive materials,” said Northard. “However, studies of actual behavior, rather than perceptions, show the opposite. That is, people will ignore those risks when there are other attractions to living or working near transportation routes or facilities that safely handle radioactive materials.”

**PFS will provide a guest speaker to your classroom or to your company or civic association. We'd be happy to respond to questions about the proposed PFS facility or speak generally about electricity production and the role of nuclear-generated electricity in today's energy mix. To request a speaker, please contact Sue Martin 801-532-5322.**

# PFS Helps Schools Prepare Tomorrow's Workers

Citing its future need for qualified employees, Private Fuel Storage delivered checks to three Utah high schools to support improvements to math and science instruction.

Checks for \$5,000 were presented to Tooele and Grantsville high schools in Tooele County, and to West High School in Salt Lake City to be used for improvements to math and science instruction.

"We want our contribution to be used at the schools' discretion for equipment, books, or continuing education for their teachers," said Scott Northard, project manager for PFS.

Explaining the gifts, Northard said, "PFS fully supports Governor Leavitt's goal of preparing the workforce of tomorrow by improving education today. If PFS receives a license to operate a clean, safe, temporary facility to store spent nuclear fuel in Skull Valley, we will need workers with a good grounding in math and science in high school, who have gone on to study nuclear science and engineering in college. We challenge other Utah businesses to get behind the Governor and support



*Top*  
(left to right) Mike Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Tooele Schools; Dr. Larry Shumway, Superintendent of Schools; Teryl Hunsaker, Tooele County Commissioner; Sandy Shepard, Tooele High School Principal; Scott Northard, PFS Project Manager.

*Center*  
(left to right) Scott Northard; Grantsville High School Principal Terry Linares; Tooele County Commissioner Dennis Rockwell.

*Bottom*  
(left to right) Scott Northard presents a check to Grantsville High School math and science faculty and a school officer – Randy Goss, Student Body President Scott Gill, Paul Hewlet, Margaret Petersen, David Millward, Travis McCluskey, and Janet Mathews.



Utah's schools with equal or greater contributions."

PFS also has an internship program for members of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians, which allows members to work for six weeks in nuclear power plants for a first hand look at some of the jobs involved in the safe handling of nuclear materials. So far, six members have served internships.

For more information about these and other issues related to the proposed PFS facility, request a copy of "Response to Questions about the Operation of the Private Fuel Storage Facility – A Report to the Citizens of Utah."

You may call

**1-888-701-8585**

and leave your name and address, or visit

[www.privatefuelstorage.com](http://www.privatefuelstorage.com)

click on "Contact Us," fill out your address information, and indicate that you would like to receive the report.

## Licensing Board Revises Licensing Schedule

A decision on PFS's license application to build and operate a temporary storage facility for spent nuclear fuel on the Skull Valley Goshute reservation has slipped to April 2002.

Originally anticipated in November 2001, the decision was postponed by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board after PFS was asked to submit additional data and analysis on earthquake and aircraft crash hazards.

This also means that hearings, which would have been held this summer, are now scheduled for November and December. These hearings, to be conducted by the Licensing Board, will focus on the remaining safety and environmental issues raised by the state and other parties in the licensing process. Most, if not all, of the hearings are expected to be open for the public to observe.

## Goshutes, PFS Team Up to Fight Diabetes

Private Fuel Storage was proud to sponsor the Skull Valley Band of Goshutes team that participated in "America's Walk for Diabetes" at Sugarhouse Park in Salt Lake City. The 5K walk is sponsored annually by the American Diabetes Association. PFS donated \$500 to sponsor the Skull Valley Team members – Kristen Bear (Captain), Jennifer Bear, Chris Skiby, Johnnie Bear, and Lori Bear-Skiby.

An estimated 16 million Americans, many of them Native Americans, suffer from diabetes. Approximately 179,000 people die every year from the disease and its complications. The "Walk" raises millions of dollars every year in an effort to find a cure for this insidious disease.



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