

GREENPEACE

April 18

THE GREENPEACE FOUNDATION

FORT MASON, BUILDING E
TELEX: 340-275 TELEPHONE: (415) 474-6767

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

Sacramento City Council
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA. 95814

Greenpeace Foundation
Sacto. Project Coord-
inator
Mike Gillogly
2230 1/2 N St.
Sacto. CA. 95816

Dear Fayor Isenberg,

April 11, 1980

The transportation of radioactive materials through the City of Sacramento poses significant hazards to the health and safety of the citizens of Sacramento. This hazard will increase, both by an increase in shipments and by the nature of the cargo, in coming years as spent fuel wastes from nuclear reactors must be transported. Sacramento is a major crossroads for interstate shipping of radioactive materials (see enclosed map).

While federal agencies (DOT, NRC, FAA, etc.) have retained most regulatory authority in this matter, many state and local governments and agencies have played an important role in safeguarding radioactive waste shipments. Ten states and 82 communities across the country adopted ordinances dealing with radioactive materials transport, largely due to the laxity of federal regulations.

Consequently, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed regulations (HM-164, Highway Routing of Radioactive Materials) which would pre-empt local and state regulations, while proposing no significant new safety measures.

Therefore it is of considerable importance that the citizens of Sacramento and Northern California participate in the development of regulations that impact so significantly on their health and safety. The DOT, however, has excluded California from its public hearing schedule, making Seattle and Denver the closest opportunity for California residents to present their concerns. This is why it is important for the City of Sacramento to join the many public interest groups and local governmental bodies urging the DOT to hold hearings in Sacramento.

The enclosed resolution is presented for your consideration. Also enclosed is a packet of background materials. I would be happy to address any concerns you may have concerning this issue, and would also like the opportunity to hear your views on the proposed resolution. ^{FILED} ^{By the City Council} ^{Office of the City Clerk} As the deadline for public comment draws near (May 31, 1980) your prompt response would be greatly appreciated.

*referred to
Law & Legis Comm.*

APR 29 1980

C.C. Council Members

Thank you,

Mike Gillogly
Mike Gillogly

Greenpeace: Sacto. Project
Coordinator

MEMORIALIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO HOLD HEARINGS ON
HM-164, HIGHWAY ROUTING OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS, IN SACRAMENTO

WHEREAS The transportation of radioactive materials through the City of Sacramento poses significant hazards to the health and safety of the citizens of Sacramento; and

WHEREAS The hazard and expense of cleaning up a spill of radioactive materials in Sacramento is borne by local and state fire and safety departments; and

WHEREAS The citizens are therefore concerned that transportation of such materials be properly regulated; and

WHEREAS The federal Department of Transportation (DOT) has proposed regulations (HM-164, Highway Routing of Radioactive Materials) which would pre-empt local and state regulations on the transportation of radioactive materials but would not remove the responsibility for cleaning up spills; and

WHEREAS The proposed Department of Transportation regulations contain no significant new safety measures that might relieve the concerns about federal laxity which have prompted ordinances in 82 communities and 10 states; and

WHEREAS The Department of Transportation has scheduled public hearings on the regulations in four cities, the closest to Sacramento being Denver and Seattle; and

WHEREAS The citizens of Sacramento and Northern California desire to participate in the development of regulations that impact significantly on their health and safety; be it therefore

RESOLVED That the City of Sacramento memorializes the Department of Transportation to hold hearings on HM-164, Highway Routing of Radioactive Materials, in Sacramento.

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Editorials

Deadly Highway Cargo

One of the less visible but dangerous offshoots of the nation's use of the atom is the problem of safely transporting radioactive materials (RAM), such as the deadly spent fuels from nuclear reactors and the atomic material used in research and medicine and by the military. Already a considerable volume is shipped by trucks along highways passing through cities and towns, and the volume will grow rapidly as nuclear plants age and their on-site storage for reactor fuel fills up. Consequently, the U.S. Department of Transportation is holding hearings on proposed new safety regulations governing those shipments — regulations of critical importance to states like California, which has sizable and growing shipments of nuclear wastes of all kinds.

A year ago the California Energy Commission completed a study on nuclear energy that included concerns about problems of transporting RAM; the governor's office and the Legislature are expected to work out proposed state regulations in the matter, and it's only logical the federal regulations should have the benefit of the state's concerns and input. Such coordination is all the more important in view of the fact that the federal regulations will preempt state and local regulations. A number of California counties already have enacted ordinances restricting the shipment of RAM and those communities too are entitled to have a say in any national rules that would supplant theirs.

Yet despite California's interest in such a critical safety matter, none of the hearings is being held in this state. The closest of the remaining hearings are in Denver (April 15) and Seattle (April 18).

The fact that DOT's regulations would preempt state and local ordinances is a major point of criticism of the federal proposals by such citizen organizations as Greenpeace and the American Friends Service Committee. Those groups, and other environmentalists, say that although the DOT rules are a small improvement over the present situation, they don't go far enough in safety requirements for the nuclear industry, or for truckers shipping RAM and the equipment its shipped in. They also contend that the training requirements for personnel handling RAM are inadequate and point out that the regulations don't cover the U.S. Energy Department's many RAM shipments.

Given the distinct possibility that roadway accidents could contaminate wide areas with deadly radioactive elements — and DOT acknowledges that in some scenarios thousands of deaths would result — Californians certainly are entitled to be heard on the safety requirements governing such shipments on the state's highways. It's not too late for DOT to schedule a California hearing, preferably in Sacramento or San Francisco. We urge the federal officials to do so.