



## 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Spent Fuel Management Seminar

Amidst the anticipation and some apprehension surrounding the hearing for the Secretary of Energy designee, Dr. Steven Chu, which took place in the US Senate this past week, nearly 100 industry representatives gathered in Washington, DC for the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Spent Fuel Management Seminar, sponsored by the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management. The two-and-a-half day seminar was packed with a total of 34 presentations from the US Department of Energy (DOE), the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), industry, and even included presentations from a think tank and academia. Some highlights from the seminar are included below; due to space restrictions, the next issue of *SpentFUEL* (to be published January 23) will contain additional seminar coverage, including comments on the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, perspectives on closing the fuel cycle, and transportation of spent nuclear fuel.

Many speakers complimented the DOE for what it accomplished in 2008 in spite of the persistent budget cuts Congress has imposed on the Yucca Mountain project. Two years ago, Ward Sproat, DOE's Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) spoke at this seminar and said he was determined to at least be able to submit the Yucca Mountain license application (LA) to the US NRC for consideration no later than June 30, 2008 notwithstanding promises from the then-new Senate Majority leader Harry Reid to do everything in his power to prevent the project from moving forward. Reid has been unsuccessful so far, as DOE met that goal and many others during the year.

Senator Reid is now making even bolder predictions about the project with his proclamations that the new Administration and Congress will either kill the project completely or let it die slowly from a lack of funds. He wants the spent fuel to be left at the reactor sites indefinitely. The government has been operating under a continuing resolution since October 1, 2008, which froze spending at the FY 2008 level of about \$386 million – a significant cut from the budget request. Rumors were that once the FY2009 budget is finally passed, Yucca could get as little as \$288 million. If that amount is retroactive to October 1, 2008, then the project will essentially shut down. If that amount is what can be spent going forward to the next fiscal year, then DOE can continue to defend the license application (LA) and the NRC can continue to review the application.

Chris Kouts, Principal Deputy Director of the project and presumed acting Director once Ward Sproat steps down after President Obama is inaugurated, detailed the accomplishments of the past year and what the Department is tasked to do in 2009. In addition to LA submittal, DOE awarded contracts for the design, licensing and demonstration of the transportation, aging and disposal (TAD) systems; DOE made available a Standard Contract for new reactors (and has signed 19 new Standard Contracts as of the end of 2008), selected a new management and operating contractor, and issued key reports, including a revised Total System Life-Cycle Cost Report and Fee Adequacy Assessment, as well as a report on the need for a second repository and one on interim storage. In addition, DOE completed five National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents.

FY 2009 activities are focused on supporting the NRC review of the LA, development of the TAD canisters, and repository facility designs. DOE has received about 130 Requests for Additional Information (RAIs), and has responded to 50 on or before the deadline. Three hundred twenty one (321) contentions to the LA have been received (2 joint contentions so 319 separate contentions), and DOE is now responding to those. In 2010, the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) will conduct hearings, and also in 2010, the NRC is scheduled to issue its Safety Evaluation Report (SER) on the project. Separately, the NRC announced January 16 that its ASLB has established three boards to consider the admissibility of these contentions. Each board consists of three judges – two with legal expertise and one with technical expertise. The three boards will consider and rule only on the admissibility of the contentions; additional boards will be established to

### OCRWM Funding Status (millions)

Program	FY08	FY09	FY09	FY09
	Enacted	Request	House	Senate
Nuclear Waste Disposal Fund	\$ 187	\$ 247	\$ 247	\$ 195
Defense Nuclear Waste	\$ 199	\$ 247	\$ 247	\$ 193
OCRWM Total	\$ 386	\$ 495	\$ 495	\$ 388

Source: Chris Kouts status presentation of Program funding.

rule on any contentions that are admitted for a hearing.

One of the most anticipated presentations each year is given by Jay Silberg of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP on the status of utility litigation against DOE for breach of contract to remove spent fuel from reactor sites by January 31, 1998. Silberg summed up the sentiment of conference participants regarding what should happen to the Yucca Mountain LA when he said his mantra is “Let Science Decide!” He noted the ASLB process is a good way to do that and encouraged Congress to let the process go forward.

Although some speakers were encouraged by the Secretary of Energy designee’s comments at the Senate hearing this past week, Silberg noted that Chu made it clear he will follow Obama’s strategy for Yucca Mountain – “I believe it is no longer a sustainable federal policy for Yucca Mountain to be considered a permanent repository,” Obama said during the Presidential campaign.

Calling the spent fuel damages litigation the “Lawyers Full Employment Act,” Silberg summarized the awards to date as shown in the chart below. Except for TVA, all the cases are in appeal or remand. More trials are scheduled this year, including one to begin this month, another in February, June and September.

Last August, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit handed down “a trio of concurrent opinions” related to the amount of damages due to utilities (*SpentFUEL* August 8, 2008). In three cases – Pacific Gas and Electric, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, and the Yankee consolidated cases – the Court reversed the Claims Court rulings and remanded the cases back to Claims Court for recalculation of the damages based on a higher waste acceptance rate, which Silberg said is the central issue in most spent nuclear fuel cases. The Appeals Court rejected the Government position that an appropriate acceptance rate is based on the 1991 Annual Ca-

capacity Report (ACR) of 900 MTU/year, and instead adopted the 1987 ACR rate of 2,650 MTU per year, which is close to the utility position of a 3,000 MTU per year acceptance rate. The Federal Circuit also decided that greater-than-class-C waste is covered by the Standard Contract, that internal labor costs are recoverable, dual purpose casks are claimable as damages, and no setoffs are allowed for unpaid one-time fees.

Silberg said that the Nebraska Public Power Case could change the entire landscape of the litigation. The Federal Circuit is reviewing a Court of Federal Claims decision that barred the government from using the unavoidable delay argument – “the dog ate my repository” excuse. If the Federal Circuit rules that DOE can argue unavoidable delay, then all cases could go back to square one because that absolves them of all responsibility. Oral arguments were held on this case on December 4, 2007, and a decision has not been handed down.

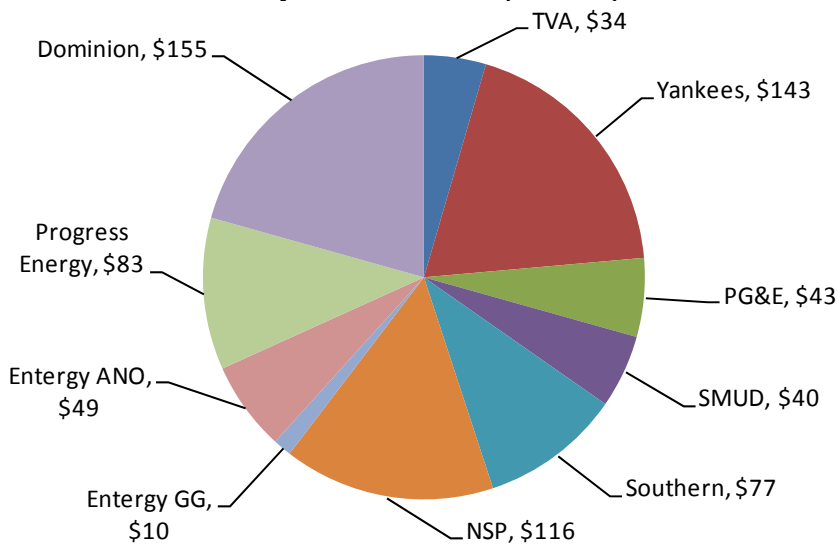
Regarding the political landscape surrounding nuclear power, Silberg noted the potential changes at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that could be forthcoming. With one Commission slot currently open, and Commissioner Lyons’ term expiring on June 30, 2009, Obama will have to fill those two positions. Furthermore, since the position of NRC Chair can be designated at will by the President, some people question whether or not Chairman Klein will choose to remain if Obama decides to make a change in the Chairmanship (many believe he will stay on the Commission, but it is not certain).

Silberg touched on the Standard Contract for new plants, which DOE has developed and utilities have signed new contracts for at least 19 units, he said. Utilities have no choice but to sign a Standard Contract for disposal of the spent fuel from a new reactor, since a contract with DOE is a Nuclear Waste Policy Act precondition for a new NRC plant license. To date, 17 applications for combined construction and oper-

ating licenses (COLs) for 26 units have been filed; the NRC has accepted 15 applications. Some major differences between the original Standard Contract and the new one:

- No required start date for DOE performance;
- DOE does not need to start accepting spent nuclear fuel until 20 years after the first spent fuel is discharged from a new reactor;
- DOE does not need to complete removal of the spent fuel until 10 years after expiration of a plant’s operation license (i.e. no set acceptance rate);
- DOE has a \$5 million per year liquidated damages limit if it does not pick up all spent nuclear fuel by 10 years after the expiration of a plant’s operating license (Silberg noted

**Utility Awards to Date (millions)**



Source: Jay Silberg presentation.

that this provision might not hold up in court);

- Unavoidable delays clause has been rewritten in an attempt to avoid court decisions establishing DOE liability;
- Utilities are subject to financial and operational penalties if they don't use spent fuel storage casks that DOE lists – a provision to encourage the use of TAD systems.

The new contract is only for new reactors and does not change DOE's obligation for any existing plants.

## Top Stories

### **Dr. Chu calls waste disposal and recycling nuclear fuel “thorny issues”**

On January 13, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to consider President Elect Barack Obama's choice for US Secretary of Energy, Dr. Steven Chu. The discussion predominantly focused on Dr. Chu's plans to meet growing energy demand in a clean and efficient manner. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources committee, opened the hearing by extending his praises and listing many of Dr. Chu's accomplishments, including his Nobel Prize for physics and his tenure as head of the Lawrence Berkley National Laboratory. Bingaman closed with the resounding statement that seemed to capture every senator's feeling by saying, “President-elect Obama has made an excellent choice in nominating Dr. Chu to be the Secretary of energy. I strongly support his nomination [...]”

In Dr. Chu's opening statement, he outlined some of his key points for his idea of future US energy policy. He stated that he seeks “a continued commitment to nuclear power, and a long-term plan for waste disposal.” Regarding cleanup of former nuclear weapons sites, Dr. Chu pledged “to do my best to accelerate these efforts in order to protect human health and the environment and to return contaminated lands to beneficial use.” Dr. Chu then faced some tough questions about his plan for future US energy policy, particularly the role of nuclear power in that policy. Overall, his responses to the questions indicate a strong support for increased use of nuclear power in the US.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) opened by asking a hard-hitting question about Dr. Chu's nuclear energy policy in saying that nuclear is a very key component in our clean energy package, but the DOE liability for handling of spent nuclear fuel is currently at \$11 billion. “If confirmed,” she asked, “what do you propose to do in the short-term to meet the government's obligation as it relates to the nuclear waste issue? And if you could speak just a little bit about the option of nuclear recycling too please.” “These are very thorny questions,” he said, but then stated that President-elect Obama has his concerns and reservations with nuclear, but he knows that DOE has the ultimate obligation to be responsible for

nuclear waste. Dr. Chu restated his support for nuclear energy, but said there needs to be a plan developed to deal with waste disposal. When asked again about recycling in America's future, Chu said that yes it is completely viable, but in the long-term. He believes recycling to be a “research problem” and “something the department should be paying a lot of attention to...certainly recycling is an option that we will be looking at very closely.”

Senator Richard Burr (R-North Carolina) asked Dr. Chu if he believed that reprocessing of nuclear fuel should be a global effort or an internal one. Chu's response was, “What we need to do is get where we need to go as quickly as possible.” He said that a global effort is not completely necessary, but if it propels the country to the desired outcome quickly and efficiently, then he is all for it.

Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) continued the reprocessing line of questioning. Sessions said he was “troubled” to hear Dr. Chu reference the Carter Administration's ability to end reprocessing in the US and called it “one of the most colossal disasters in the last 30 years in terms of energy.” Sessions then asked Dr. Chu if he was seriously committed to making a breakthrough on reprocessing because of its significance to the nuclear waste issue in the US. Dr. Chu reiterated that he knows reprocessing is a technology that we need to develop, and said we have to begin switching to Generation III and Generation III+ reactors to burn MOX fuel.

One of the most pointed questions about nuclear came from Senator Mary Landrieu (D-Louisiana) when she asked, “What are your top three strategies to move us forward on nuclear power?” Chu responded that first and foremost that he will do what it takes to accelerate the federal loan guarantee program to restart nuclear power in the US. Second, Chu said he plans to develop a long-range plan for waste disposal. And third, research needs to be done to see the potential of reprocessing to greatly reduce both the amount and lifetime of the waste. Senator Bob Corker (R-Tennessee) asked Dr. Chu if he supports “all-out nuclear loan guarantees?” Yes, Chu responded, because he is confident that DOE will move ahead, despite the waste issue.

Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) brought up high-level waste (HLW) cleanup at her home state's Hanford Site. Currently the budget of DOE for next year is \$25 billion, of which ten percent is to be allocated to remediate the Hanford Site. Cantwell reminded that the funding from DOE to cleanup Hanford has fallen flat before, and asked if it will do so under his watch. Chu said that the DOE has both a moral and legal obligation to clean up sites with HLW issues, and he will do what he can to see to it that they are cleaned appropriately under his tenure as head of the DOE.

Dr. Chu is expected to be confirmed by the full Senate.

## US, UAE sign nuclear cooperation agreement

On January 15, outgoing US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Aheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, signed a 123 Agreement that establishes a framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation and commerce between the two countries that enhances international standards of nuclear non-proliferation, safety and security. Secretary Rice said the agreement is "a tangible expression of the United States' desire for active cooperation with states in the Middle East and around the world to meet their energy needs in a manner that is consistent with the highest standards of safety, of security, and of nonproliferation." Secretary Rice noted that both she and President Bush believe that "nuclear power must be an important energy source throughout the world as states strive to meet growing energy needs, while at the same time working to eliminate harmful greenhouse gas emissions." Her UAE counterpart, bin Zayed, said the agreement "will benefit both of our countries, and is another example of the strong relationship between the United States and the United Arab Emirates... This will allow the UAE to develop its civilian nuclear program to the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation. The agreement will also open opportunities for US firms to be active participants in the UAE nuclear energy program."

The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched a Web site containing extensive information about the agreement. It includes UAE policy documents and statements, statistics related to electricity needs, commentary from third parties about the UAE plans, as well as frequently asked questions. The site is <http://www.usuae123.com>

The UAE has projected massive increases in demand for electricity in the coming decades, and has determined that nuclear energy is a "viable and compelling option for meeting the UAE's future electricity demand." The national annual peak demand for electricity is calculated to more than double to 40,000 megawatts by 2020. Current, committed capacity can meet only half of this.

The UAE has pledged to forego any domestic fuel enrichment or reprocessing capability, in favor of long-term external fuel supply arrangements. Additionally, UAE's policy calls for close and continuous coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as cooperation with the governments and firms of responsible nuclear supplier nations, including the United States. The UAE supports the establishment of an international nuclear fuel bank under the auspices of the IAEA, as proposed by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, and is supporting the fuel bank through a \$10 million contribution.

The US State Department said in its statement that the agreement "has the potential to usher in an era of responsible nuclear energy development throughout the Middle East. The UAE's approach to development of civil nuclear energy stands

## Industry Calendar

- January 28, 2009  
**NEI Fuel Supply Forum**  
Nuclear Energy Institute  
<http://www.nei.org/newsandevents/>  
The Willard InterContinental, Washington, DC, USA
- February 12-13, 2009  
**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Nuclear Energy**  
Platts  
<http://www.platts.com>  
Marriott Bethesda North Hotel, Bethesda, MD USA
- March 1-5, 2009  
**WM2009**  
WM Symposia  
<http://www.wmsym.org/>  
Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, AZ, USA
- April 21-23, 2009  
**World Nuclear Fuel Cycle**  
World Nuclear Association/Nuclear Energy Institute  
<http://www.nei.org/newsandevents/>  
Sheraton on the Park, Sydney, Australia
- May 12-14, 2009  
**Dry Storage Information Forum**  
Nuclear Energy Institute  
<http://www.nei.org/newsandevents/>  
Hyatt Regency Coconut Point, Bonita Springs, FL, USA

Details are available at:  
<http://www.uxc.com/c/data-industry/uxc-calendar.aspx>

in direct contrast to Iran's pursuit of nuclear capabilities incompatible with IAEA and UN Security Council resolutions."

The agreement will be forwarded to the US Congress for review.

## News Briefs

### DOE seeks public comment on its Yucca Mountain National Transportation Plan

The US DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) published a notice in the January 16, 2009 *Federal Register* that it is seeking public comment on a *National Transportation Plan* that outlines DOE's current strategy and planning for developing and implementing a system to ship spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste from where the material is generated or stored to the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

Ward Sproat, outgoing OCRWM director, said the plan "provides a framework for a safe, secure, and efficient transportation system, and builds upon more than four decades of national and international experience in safely transporting spent fuel. We are engaging in advance planning for shipments to Yucca Mountain because experience has shown us that early, collaborative planning with our stakeholders is critical to mission success. We welcome comments on the

Plan and look forward to working with stakeholders as we move forward.”

The transportation system will be developed in stages, and will include the construction of a separate rail line in Nevada. Actual shipments are not expected to begin before 2020. OCRWM's National Transportation Plan will be updated as appropriate to accommodate changes to the waste management system, reflect progress in the development and implementation of the transportation system, and incorporate stakeholder and public comments.

Comments are requested by April 30, 2009. The National Transportation Plan is available on the OCRWM website at <http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov>

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### ***Nevada comments on OCRWM's Federal Register Notice***

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On January 12, the State of Nevada's Governor's Office issued comments on the OCRWM's October 21, 2008 *Federal Register* notice on "Safe Routine Transportation and Emergency Response Training; Technical Assistance and Funding." Nevada stated in its comments that DOE "completely ignores" the need for the total amount of funding necessary to train and equip a local emergency response team in the event of an accident in shipment of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) to the proposed waste repository at Yucca Mountain. The State maintains that DOE "sets arbitrary base amounts for annual planning and training grants, but contains absolutely no basis for determining if such amounts are adequate or even reasonable." Nevada wants DOE to inform Congress what the actual amount of funds would be needed to implement such an adequate first-responders program, and that DOE should conduct a "comprehensive national needs assessment as the basis for adequate annual budget requests that will ensure sufficient funds are available to prepare states and tribes adequately for NWPA shipments and for implementing a long-term Section 180 (c) program."

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### ***Bill reintroduced in House to ban import of foreign radioactive waste***

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Congressman Jim Matheson of Utah, along with Congressman Bart Gordon of Tennessee and Lee Terry of Nebraska, has reintroduced his legislation that would ban the import of foreign radioactive waste. The three Congressmen introduced the bipartisan *Radioactive Import Deterrence (RID) Act of 2009* on January 15. Matheson, Gordon and Ed Whitfield of Kentucky introduced an identical bill on March 13, 2008 (*SpentFUEL* March 14, 2008), which prohibits the importation of low-level radioactive waste from foreign countries into the US unless it is waste being returned to a US government or military facility or it is waste resulting from nuclear material that originated in the US and is being returned for management and disposal.

Matheson and the others submitted this bill in response to EnergySolutions' application before the US NRC for a license to import up to 20,000 tons of LLRW from decommissioned nuclear reactors in Italy. Most of that LLRW would be processed and recycled in TN, with about 1,600 being sent to the EnergySolutions's LLRW disposal facility in Utah.

A companion bill is expected to be introduced in the Senate.

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### ***Low-level radioactive waste disposal awarded to Valhi, Inc.***

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On January 14, Valhi Inc. announced that the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) issued a final license for the near-surface disposal of Class A, B, and C low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) to Valhi's wholly-owned subsidiary, Waste Control Specialists (WCS). The license will allow WCS to operate a LLRW disposal facility at the company's site in Andrews County, Texas under the terms of the Texas Compact (Texas and Vermont), and a federal LLRW disposal facility. WCS will be authorized to dispose of Class A, B and C low-level radioactive waste.

WCS has entered into a contract with URS Corporation's Washington Division to design and construct the both the LLRW and a byproduct material disposal sites. The byproduct site is expected to be operational in the second quarter of 2009, and construction of the LLRW is slated to begin in the second quarter of 2009, "following the completion of some pre-construction licensing and administrative matters."

EnergySolutions issued a press release in response to Valhi's announcement. EnergySolutions noted all the conditions WCS must meet before it can dispose of either federal or commercial waste, and said, "If the conditions are ever met, a small amount of commercial waste would be allowed for disposal from the states of Vermont and Texas, members of the Texas compact." Furthermore, EnergySolutions says that WCS will encounter many challenges in terms of becoming fully operational as the amount of time to be fully qualified to accept such waste is extremely lengthy.

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### ***DOE awards Hanford contract to Colorado firm***

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Washington Closure Hanford, the DOE firm charged with cleaning up and closing the Hanford Nuclear Site, has awarded a cleanup subcontract worth \$2.9 million to Foothills Environmental Inc., a small, Hispanic-owned business in Golden, Colorado. Washington Closure selected the company to be a member of its mentor-protégé program, which is a DOE initiative to increase the amount of federal work done by small and disadvantaged businesses by teaming them with DOE contractors.

Work will start later this winter and is scheduled to be completed by September 2009. Foothills Environmental will be responsible for cleaning up contaminated soil, piping, hazard-

ous chemical contamination, and most importantly, about a half-mile of piping that has possibly leaked chromium into the ground.

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### **Larsen & Toubro signs agreement with Westinghouse for AP1000 reactors for India**

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Larsen & Toubro (L&T), a global technology, manufacturing, engineering and construction company, said January 16 it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Westinghouse Electric Company, a group company of Toshiba Corporation, for cooperation to effectively address the projected need in India for Pressurized Water Nuclear Reactors with Modular construction technology.

L&T said that while it has been playing a lead role in equipment manufacture, construction and project management for PWRs in India's domestic program, this MoU with Westinghouse "represents a major step forward for L&T in Pressurized Water Reactors of modular design." The agreement will enable both companies "to utilize indigenous capabilities for the Turnkey Construction of nuclear power plants including supply of reactor equipment and systems, valves, electrical & instrumentation products and fabrication of structural, piping and equipment modules for the Westinghouse AP 1000 plants." The statement said that both companies "are optimistic about the growing opportunities in India and around the world. L&T intends to play a key role in this scenario by building strong partnerships with leading companies in the field."

This announcement coincides with the conclusion of a historic 5-day trade mission to New Delhi and Mumbai, India, coordinated by a partnership of the Nuclear Energy Institute and the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC). More than 60 senior executives representing more than 30 world-leading commercial nuclear companies (including UxC) participated in the mission, which was the first commercial nuclear trade mission to visit India since the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) approved India for global commercial nuclear trade. It was also the largest ever mission mounted by the USIBC.

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### **Exelon formally integrates AmerGen assets into Exelon Nuclear**

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Exelon Generation stated January 8 that it has officially integrated the nuclear generation assets held by its AmerGen Energy Company LLC subsidiary into Exelon Nuclear and dissolved the AmerGen legal entity. On December 23, 2008, the US NRC approved the formal transfer of the operating licenses for the Clinton Power Station in Clinton, IL, the Oyster Creek Generating Station in Forked River, NJ, and the Three Mile Island Unit 1 in Londonberry Township, PA.

Exelon's press release said that while the AmerGen facilities have operated with combined operations, reporting and regulatory functions with Exelon Nuclear's seven other nuclear facilities since late 2000, the integration now includes all other business areas, such as budget, employee payroll and benefits, and taxes.

AmerGen was formed in 1997 as a joint venture between British Energy and PECO Energy. AmerGen acquired Clinton Power Station and Three Mile Island Unit 1 in December 1999, and Oyster Creek Generating Station in August 2000. In October 2000, PECO Energy merged with Unicom to create Exelon Corp., and in December 2003, Exelon Generation acquired British Energy's 50 percent stake in AmerGen.

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### **Magnetic Letters**

A kindergartner was practicing spelling with magnetic letters on the refrigerator: CAT, DOG, DAD, and MOM have been proudly displayed for all to see. One morning while getting ready for the day, he bounded into the room with his arms outstretched. In his hands were three magnetic letters: G-O-D.

"Look what I spelled, Mom!" with a proud smile on his face.

"That's wonderful!" his mom praised him. "Now go put them on the fridge so Dad can see when he gets home tonight." The mom happily thought that the Catholic education is certainly having an impact.

Just then, a little voice called from the kitchen. "Mom? How do you spell ZILLA?"

### **SpentFUEL Subscription Details**

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