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**WEST VALLEY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN FY 1990/91**

Topical Report

By
M. W. Damerow

September 1989

Work Performed Under Contract No. AC07-81NE44139

For
U.S. Department of Energy
Morgantown Energy Technology Center
Morgantown, West Virginia

By
West Valley Nuclear Services Co., Inc.
West Valley, New York

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West Valley Demonstration Project Community Relations Plan FY 1990/91

TOPICAL REPORT

By
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September 1989

Work Performed Under Contract No. DE-AC07-8-NE44139

Prepared for
U. S. Department of Energy
Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Community Relations Plan is to fully inform the community about the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) and provide opportunities for public input. A sound approach to community relations is essential to the creation and maintenance of public awareness and community support.

The WVDP is a matter of considerable public interest because it deals with nuclear waste. The mission of the WVDP is to solve an existing environmental concern by solidifying high-level radioactive waste and transporting the solidified waste to a federal repository for permanent disposal. The public requires evidence of the continued commitment and demonstrated progress of the industry and government in carrying out the mission in order to sustain confidence that the WVDP is being managed well and will be successfully completed. For this reason, a comprehensive communication plan is essential for the successful completion of the WVDP.

In addition, in 1988 the WVDP initiated development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will provide environmental information for consideration in federal and state decision-making related to the WVDP completion activities by Department of Energy (DOE) and state decision-making on final closure of the Western New York Nuclear Service Center (the Center) by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). A strong community relations plan is necessary to facilitate public participation in the EIS process.

1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The WVDP was authorized by an Act of Congress (Public Law 96-368) in 1980. Its mission is to carry out

"... a high-level radioactive waste management demonstration at the Western New York Nuclear Service Center in West Valley, New York (the Center), for the purpose of demonstrating solidification techniques which can be used for preparing high-level radioactive waste for disposal."

The WVDP occupies approximately 200 acres of the 3345-acre Center and is the joint responsibility of the U.S. DOE and the State of New York. The remainder of the Center premises, including the portion of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensed disposal area used for disposal of pre-WVDP waste and the shut-down state-licensed disposal area, is the responsibility of the State of New York.

In June 1982, the DOE published a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS): "Final Environmental Impact Statement - Long-Term Management of Liquid High-Level Radioactive Waste stored at the Western New York Nuclear Service Center, West Valley" (DOE/EIS-0081). In DOE's Record of Decision, DOE determined it would construct and operate facilities at the Center to solidify the high-level wastes stored in underground tanks.

Phase I of the WVDP is defined as those activities associated with the solidification of the liquid high-level wastes in the buried tanks and the development of containers suitable for the permanent disposal of the solidified wastes.

Phase II is defined as those activities associated with the transportation of the solidified high-level waste to a federal repository, disposal of low-level and transuranic project wastes, and decontamination and decommissioning of facilities used for the WVDP.

2.0 WVDP RESPONSIBILITY

The WVDP must act as the facilitator that creates the context for effective public participation and problem solving. The primary responsibility for effective and meaningful public education and participation rests with WVDP management.

3.0 COMMUNICATIONS PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy and practice of the WVDP to foster and ensure open, candid communications with the public.

It is of particular importance that community relations activities be structured to encourage and facilitate two-way communication between the public and the WVDP. Efforts to educate the public about WVDP activities are of equal importance to the efforts to understand public concerns

4.0 COMMUNITY RELATIONS STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

The overall strategy of the community relations program is to educate the community on the WVDP and encourage and facilitate two-way communication. To accomplish this, we have established the following objectives:

- Develop effective communication mechanisms between the WVDP management team and the general public, the media, public officials, educators, and environmental groups
- Develop information materials to assist the public in understanding the WVDP
- Report on WVDP progress to the public and the media
- Encourage visits to the WVDP and presentations to the community to enhance understanding of WVDP
- Provide opportunities for public participation in EIS process
- Build public confidence that the WVDP will be successfully completed

5.0 COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

A variety of communications activities have been planned to provide a basis for meeting the plan objectives, including:

- Community Outreach
- West Valley Interface Participant Group
- Open House
- Media Relations
- Speakers Bureau
- Facility Tours
- Materials and Development
- EIS Support

These programs are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

The community relations plan focuses primarily on local community audiences, however, the needs of the extended community and the media are also addressed. The elements of the plan were formulated by identifying key audiences, assessing information needs, and designing programs that both meet the needs of the various audiences and support plan objectives. The key WVDP audiences included:

- The local public
- Local, regional, and state officials
- Technical, environmental, civic, and special interest groups
- Local and regional media
- National media, as appropriate
- The educational community

Each aspect of the plan, as delineated in Section 5.0, is targeted to a specific cross section of the audiences identified. The specific audiences for each plan area are listed in Section 7.1 to 7.8.

6.1 Community Outreach

Community Relations personnel will actively solicit local speaking engagements to technical, special interest, educational, and civic organizations to forge a link between the WVDP and the community. Beginning in FY 1990, a biannual community newsletter will be established to provide a progress update to local citizens.

On an annual basis, a general survey of the community will be conducted to provide a basis for WVDP understanding of public issues and concerns about the WVDP. This understanding of public attitudes and concerns is essential to the continued evolution of a responsive and effective communications program that meets the needs of the community.

An effective system is in place to answer requests for information in a timely and effective manner. We will expand our portfolio of information materials to provide a broader range of information for public dissemination.

In addition, the WVDP will participate in local trade fairs, support local events, provide "good neighbor" donations to civic activities, provide in-kind services to select groups (i.e. schools, etc.), and provide educational achievement awards locally.

6.2 West Valley Interface Participant Group

The West Valley Interface Participant Group (WVIP) was founded in 1987 to provide an opportunity for concerned citizens and local officials to talk directly with the WVDP leaders. The group comprises local town council members, leading educators, and environmentalists from the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes.

Together, the WVIP group and WVDP management determine the topics to be discussed at the quarterly meetings. WVDP management personnel discuss WVDP issues and progress in an open and candid manner and seek public comment on WVDP activities. Informal notes from the meetings are distributed to all attendees.

6.3 Open House

On an annual basis, the WVDP conducts an Open House designed to allow the public to tour the site, view detailed exhibits on WVDP activities, meet employees, and speak to WVDP experts. The event is designed to enhance public understanding of the WVDP.

Open House is extensively publicized to generate as large an audience as possible. Tour routes are established and speakers address specific WVDP activities for WVDP guests. In addition, WVDP experts are available at all of the more than 20 exhibits to interact with the attending public. A survey is taken of Open House attendees to determine the effectiveness of the event and to solicit comments for improvement.

6.4 Press releases

Press Releases are written to highlight WVDP accomplishments as well as to inform the public of any situation which has the potential to affect them. Releases are distributed to local newspapers, radio and television stations, and if appropriate, to selected national media. Media representatives are invited to the site to document WVDP progress. To facilitate credibility and openness, WVDP problems are also discussed with media representatives and interviews with WVDP management are provided periodically.

Maintaining good relations with the media is necessary to achieve a wide distribution of WVDP news. Access to key management and reporting both accomplishments and problems is essential to maintaining WVDP credibility.

6.5 Speakers Bureau

An employee Speakers Bureau is maintained to represent the WVDP with targeted interest groups and during on-site tours. Members are given the opportunity to participate in media and communications training. In addition, weekly briefing sessions are conducted to disseminate accurate and current WVDP information to Bureau members.

Through the Speakers Bureau, community groups are in personal contact with WVDP personnel. This contact helps convey confidence in WVDP progress and enhances public awareness and understanding.

6.6 Facility Tours

The WVDP encourages people to visit the site and learn about the WVDP directly. Members of the Speakers Bureau are trained to provide tours of the site and to discuss all aspects of the WVDP. During site tours, detailed information about the WVDP is provided and the tour members can ask questions of WVDP experts at each tour stop.

Seeing the actual WVDP systems and speaking directly with WVDP personnel enhances public confidence and understanding of WVDP activities. Site visits help to relieve anxiety and concerns by providing first-hand knowledge of attention to safety and system performance.

6.7 Materials Development

Information materials specific to various aspects of the WVDP and general WVDP information will be developed and revised on an annual basis. Fact sheets are developed to address WVDP technical events and accomplishments. Articles, newsletters, brochures, and a briefing book are developed and revised to share project information. These materials will be expanded in 1990. An annual accomplishments videotape is produced to document site activity. The videotape is used to inform Congress, the media, and the public on WVDP activities and accomplishments.

Extensive slide, video, and photographic documentation of the WVDP is maintained for use with the public and technical audiences.

Information materials support all community relations activities and serve to provide accurate WVDP information when personnel contact is not possible.

6.8 EIS Support

Progress on preparation of the EIS will be conveyed to the media and the public as key milestones are achieved. Activities will include press releases, informational mailings, press briefings, and discussion at WVIP group meetings.

The existing Speakers Bureau will be used to convey EIS information to the public on a regular basis. Specialized training covering EIS activities will be provided to the speakers.

Materials developed for public review during EIS preparation will be maintained in an information repository on-site, which is accessible to the general public.

This activity will assure compliance with National Environmental Policy Act public information requirements and enhance public participation in the EIS process.

In addition, a detailed EIS Public Information/Participation Plan will be developed in FY1990.

7.0 FY1990/91 SCHEDULE

A time-phased schedule for FY1990/91 implementation of this community relations plan follows.

7.1 Community Outreach

Audiences:

- Civic, technical, educational, and special interest groups
- Local public
- Local officials

Activity	Schedule
1. Conduct presentations	Two per month
2. Distribute WVDP update newsletter	March 1990 September 1990 March 1991 September 1991
3. Respond to information requests	Within one week
4. Support community events	By request based on value to the WVDP
5. Conduct public survey	Annually

7.2 West Valley Interface Participants

Audiences:

- Coalition on West Valley Wastes
- Local officials
- Educational leaders

Activity	Schedule
1. Conduct technical meetings	Quarterly
2. Distribute minutes	Within 1 month of meeting

7.3 Open House

Audiences:

- Local and regional public
- Local and regional media

Activity	Schedule
1. Plan event	April-Sept 1990 April-Sept 1991
2.. Develop exhibits/materials	July-Sept 1990 July-Sept 1991
3. Conduct event	September 1990 September 1991
4. Evaluate survey responses	October 1990 October 1991

7.4 Media Relations

Audiences:

- Local and regional media
- National media, as appropriate
- General public

Activity	Schedule
1. Develop pro-active press release	At milestones
2. Other press releases	As required
3. Arrange interviews	Five per year
4. Arrange site visits/briefings	Five per year
5. Special events	At milestones

7.5 Speakers Bureau

Audiences:

- Civic
- Technical
- Special interest
- Educational groups

Activity	Schedule
1. Provide speaker training	August 1990 August 1991
2. Provide WWDP information to speakers	Weekly
3. Provide speakers	Two per month
4. Create standard presentation modules:	
WWDP overview	February 1990
Safety and environment	June 1990
EIS	February 1991
Others	As Required

7.6 Facility Tours

Audiences:

- Educational
- Technical
- Special interest
- Civic groups

Activity	Schedule
1. Tour guide training	Twice annually
2. Conduct Tours	Four per month 1200 people per year

7.7 Material Development

Audiences:

- All

Activity	Schedule
1. Develop fact sheet/brochure	
WVDP overview	Annually
WVDP briefing book	Twice annually
	January 1991
Low-level waste management	March 1990
IRTS	July 1990
Vitrification	October 1990
Safety	January 1991
Environmental monitoring	April 1991
Analytical chemistry	July 1991
Others	As appropriate
2. Annual accomplishments videotape	January 1990
	January 1991
3. General purpose videotapes	
WVDP overview	March 1990
Safety/radiation	June 1990
Fuel shipout	August 1990
4. Update slide/photo/video files	Ongoing

7.8 EIS Support

Audiences:

- All

Activity	Schedule
1. Progress reports and information materials	At milestones
2. Maintain information repository	Ongoing
3. Develop detailed Public Information/ Participation Plan	January 1990