

Charleston Meeting - January 1997

MEETING OVERVIEW

The Transportation External Coordination Working Group (TEC/WG) held its eleventh semi-annual meeting January 14-16, 1997 in Charleston, South Carolina. Over one hundred participants, representing state, tribal and local governments, regional groups, industry, professional organizations, and the U.S. Department of Energy, met to address a variety of issues related to DOE's transportation activities for radioactive materials. The following summarizes the major discussions and action items from the meeting.

TOPIC GROUP SUMMARIES

Topic Groups have been formed with TEC/WG participants having particular interest or expertise in each of four areas: Route Identification, Funding and Technical Assistance for Emergency Preparedness, Railroad Operational Issues, and Training. The groups, ranging in size from 8 to 24 participants, meet on Tuesday morning before the start of the regular TEC/WG meeting.

The groups will continue to collect and synthesize information on each topic via discussion papers and conference calls throughout the year in order to report regularly to the full TEC/WG membership at meetings. DOE intends to take the results of the Topic Group deliberations and move them into program initiatives and decisions. The following is a summary of the activities and progress of each Topic Group:

Route Identification Process:

The group discussed factors related to routing decisions and some participants suggested that an ultimate goal of the topic group could be to propose additional DOT guidance that would supplement existing DOT regulations regarding routing, much like the DOT document entitled Guidelines for Selecting Preferred Highway Routes for Highway Route Controlled Quantity Shipments of Radioactive Materials (DOT/RSPA/HMS/92-02). If produced, this guidance would outline why routing considerations are important to states, and would put forth more concrete suggested approaches for determining region-wide preferred routes. The group determined that a discussion paper outlining routing considerations and why the guidance may be necessary would be an appropriate first step; subsequent actions might include the appointment of a special commission to formally promulgate the guidance, or notice-and-comment on the proposed policy. DOT suggested participants could petition DOT as organizations or as individual states. DOE indicated it did not plan to request changes to the DOT policy.

Mechanics of Providing Funding and Technical Assistance for Emergency Preparedness:

The group has developed a mission statement and task plan covering its activities. Topic Group participants emphasized that flexibility in providing funding and technical assistance is important to address regional and local differences. Another important component of equitable funding and technical assistance for transportation and emergency preparedness is the manner in which routing of potential shipments is considered; the participants identified several routing models that could be helpful in making such determinations. The group asked TEC/WG participants for feedback on its draft equipment list and its draft task plan on technical assistance.

Rail Issues:

The Railroad Operational Issues Topic Group was formed to provide the TEC/WG with more in-depth discussion about logistics and operational functions unique to railroads. Some of the issues that have arisen at past TEC/WG meetings (and at the initial Topic Group conference calls) include the potential application of CVSA's enhanced inspection standards to rail shipments; infrastructure issues; special operating restrictions for radioactive cargoes; worker issues for shortline railroads; and lessons learned from past accidents.

One important issue with regard to rail shipments continues to be the authority that states and tribes have to inspect enroute shipments of radioactive materials. A related issue important to the topic group has been what arrangements have been made to physically perform the inspections, regardless of the legal authority that states and tribes may have. The participants are currently examining which states have inspection policies in place.

Training:

The group discussed a number of issues related to DOE's planning for training needs, particularly those developed and implemented by DOE's Idaho Operations Office (DOE-ID). Related issues included: screening of ongoing hazmat training; development and modification of DOE training modules; modification of "awareness" training as required by 29 CFR 1910.120; different training levels based on level of response required; and the level of training needed pursuant to Section 180(c) of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act; and differences in training needs among states and regions because of population or other demographic differences. The participants focused particularly on the issue of the kind of instrumentation and training that will be needed by local responders. Some participants felt that basic emergency response did not require any radiological instrumentation, and that ill-trained personnel might do more harm than good. Others were of the opinion that first responders might not respond at all without instrumentation out of an overabundance of caution.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

General Planning:

The group discussed EM's current efforts to bring about changes in the NRC regulations regarding shipment post-notifications. Currently, there is a ten-day waiting period before information can be disclosed, and DOE wants to see this modified. Prenotification of tribes is a related issue as well, and although DOE's policy for notifying tribes is the same as that used for states, the NRC regulations do not specify this. DOT officials pointed out that the hazardous materials transportation law is up for reauthorization this year; interested parties should submit comments to DOT as soon as possible. Planning and training grants to states and local governments are expected to be a popular topic of discussion. With regard to Section 180(c) of the NWPA, a revised draft Notice of Proposed Policy and Procedures is being planned that will put forth the potential approach RW will take regarding technical assistance to states and tribes. This NOPP is planned to be issued in the summer of 1997.

Emergency Management/Training and Technical Assistance Session:

Discussion focused on the awareness-level training that was recently developed. Some related concerns included the impact that reductions in EPA staff and trainers for the RETLR course may cause. Close communication between DOE and the state and local emergency response community could serve to counter negative effects of downsizing, they said. Participants also stated that the accompanying response video did an effective job in communicating the right messages to local responders. In addition, several participants noted that the use of video instructional tools and the development of train-the-trainer programs were ways to stretch training budgets and get information out to more people, but the effectiveness of having a live instructor in a teaching environment cannot be replicated. To the extent possible, training programs should also include direct instruction components.

Transportation Operations Session:

Most of the discussion focused on the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Acquisition of Waste Acceptance and Transportation Services issued by the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (RW) for waste acceptance and transportation. Some participants were concerned that the regional approach might fragment the overall transportation program because the Regional Servicing Agents (RSAs) would not coordinate their efforts where necessary. Discussion also focused on other potential problems, such as the ability to accurately determine the overall modal mix and complications in NEPA analysis because of the uncertainties inherent in this approach. Commenters were also deeply concerned that the draft RFP neither reflects the institutional history and planning/technical recommendations that have been provided by states, tribes, and other affected parties in the past, nor does it reflect the precedents set and lessons learned by other DOE programs with significant transportation planning activities, like the WIPP program. Participants suggested that DOE reexamine the requirements for the draft RFP and consider reissuing a revised draft that addresses these concerns.

Action Items

- The DOE Senior Executive Transportation Forum will be presented with the issue of how to keep stakeholder groups involved in the TEC/WG process given budget cuts.

ACTION: Rich Brancato, by July TEC/WG meeting

- DOE will look for ways to improve communication across programs and with field office staff.

ACTION: Rich Brancato, by July TEC/WG meeting

- Members should work to address the issue of communication within their organizations. (use committees, guest speakers, newsletters, etc.)

ACTION: Members will send progress report to Alex Thrower by May 1st for inclusion in the TEC/WG pre-meeting mailings and discussion at TEC/WG.

- TEC/WG members will contribute information on current state, tribal and local laws and regulations regarding authority to inspect rail shipments

ACTION: Members were to send information to Alex Thrower by March 1.

- Improve comment process by using colored paper on documents for review and include instructions to respond by a certain date.

ACTION: UETC will institute this in future mailings.

- Members/Participants will provide their Home Page addresses to add links to the TEC/WG Home Page.

ACTION: Send to Alex Thrower ASAP.

- Members/Participants will provide their organization's meeting dates for the TEC/WG Homepage in order to facilitate communication and cross-education among organizations.

ACTION: Send to Alex Thrower ASAP.

- Send out a list of TEC/WG documents in draft and final stages in order to update Member Resource Notebooks.

ACTION: Document will be distributed by April 11.

- CRCPD and ENA will work together to organize a guest speaker at the ENA national meeting.

ACTION: Linda Minton, Aubrey Godwin, report back at July TEC/WG meeting

- DOE was asked for a listing of subscribers to the Fire Emergency Training Network (FETN).

ACTION: Jim Cruickshank/Clark Hyder will provide.

- RW and FRA will review a background paper being developed by FRA on states and tribal authority to stop and inspect rail shipments.

ACTION: Markus Popa and Kevin Blackwell will work together and report in July.

- Keep the RW infrastructure task plan open and readdress at the July meeting.

ACTION: Markus Popa, July meeting

- Comment on Matrix and Equipment List passed out by "Mechanics..." and Training Topic Groups.

ACTION: Was due to Aubrey Godwin or Judith Bradbury by February 5.

- Comment on Quick Facts.

ACTION: Was due to Judith Holm or Alex Thrower by February 15.

- Comment on "Answering Your Questions" document.

ACTION: Was due to Judith Holm or Alex Thrower by March 1.

- DOE asked for feedback on the Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program.

ACTION: Was due to Jim Cruickshank/Clark Hyder by February 15.