

West Valley Citizen Task Force

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CONTACT: Leonore Lambert; 716-652-8173

At their most recent meeting Wednesday, December 20, the West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) approved a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) expressing concern about the continued spread of a radioactive groundwater plume onto previously uncontaminated land. While the U.S. Department of Energy is required by federal law to decontaminate the site, the Task Force is requesting whatever action the Nuclear Regulatory Commissioners can take to force the Department to clean up the plume.

In today's letter the Task Force questions why the Commission appears to merely monitor the technical process rather than find a way to force cleanup in the interest of public safety. Meanwhile, the Department claims that the spread of the plume is not an immediate threat to health and safety, apparently because it is not affecting property with public access. The Task Force is concerned that a precedent is being set and that continued contamination will compromise future use of the land.

The plume, emanating from a leak at the original Process Building almost forty years ago, continues to spread beyond project premises onto portions of the land held by the state. Disagreement between New York State officials and those of the U.S. Department of Energy over this and similar responsibilities at the site has resulted in New York's recent filing of a lawsuit to expedite cleanup.

In a letter to state and federal leaders of those agencies earlier this Fall , the Task Force expressed frustration at the inability of government officials at various levels to come to agreement. The site is supposedly managed jointly by the Department of Energy (DOE) and New York State Energy and Research Authority (NYSERDA), with the DOE as lead agency. However a breakdown in negotiations over responsibilities occurred a few years ago, and while much low-level waste has been moved off site, the lack of completion of an environmental impact statement and final decision for cleanup has resulted in delays which threaten the timely completion of a proper cleanup of the site.

The West Valley Citizen Task Force meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Ashford Office Complex at 10282 Rock Springs Road, West Valley, New York.