



Transitioning Transportation Emergency Response Preparedness Programs to Minimize Impacts on Spent Nuclear Fuel Transport Operations

Marsha Keister,
Senior Consulting Technical Specialist INEEL/BBWI, Idaho Falls, Idaho USA

Implementing adequate institutional programs and validating preparedness for emergency response to radioactive materials transportation incidents along U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) shipping corridors poses unique challenges to transportation operations management. Delayed or insufficient attention to state and tribal preparedness needs can significantly impact the transportation operations schedule and budget.

As the largest non-commercial transporter of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) the DOE and its transportation activities have come under intense scrutiny from Congress, states, tribes, local governments, and the public. Of primary concern is the adequacy of emergency response preparedness for these highly visible radioactive materials shipments. Federal agencies that have regulatory emergency response and/or preparedness roles include; DOE, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Transportation. DOE currently supports an extensive array of institutional and emergency preparedness activities that are conducted at all levels of government nationwide. DOE SNF shipping programs provide resources to ensure that the needs of states and tribes, who have the lead role in responding to radiological transportation emergencies in their jurisdictions, are met, even though by regulation states and tribes are already required to maintain those emergency response capabilities. Under this system the DOE has been paying for the risk that the SNF shipments pose by providing funds (sometimes more than once along a single shipping corridor) for training, technical assistance and equipment. No other industry requires the risk providers to give similar support to communities. States and tribes, however, assert that sustainability for radiological emergency response programs along DOE shipping corridors requires continued DOE funding.

Transitioning to a coordinated national strategy for radiological emergency preparedness is needed to eliminate replication of funding and to ease the burden currently shouldered by individual DOE shipping campaigns. This paper overviews responsibilities of agencies who have a regulatory role in preparing for radiological transportation emergency response, identifies stakeholder concerns with radioactive materials transportation and discusses future preparedness program implementation strategies. The author also provides insight into preparedness activities for recent SNF shipping campaigns and identifies lessons learned as a result of the impact of those activities on transportation operations planning.