

City vexed over southern nuclear waste route

By Roy Theiss
News Staff Writer

A lack of cooperation between state and city officials has left Henderson representatives vexed over the transportation of low-level nuclear waste. The radioactive material is being shipped through Boulder City and Henderson en route to the Nevada Test Site.

At a meeting Thursday with state officials from the Department of Energy and North Las Vegas,

officials cleared the air concerning trucking of low-level radioactive material through residential areas near Craig Road.

City Manager Phil Speight said they were not given an opportunity to discuss the matter. "I don't believe the city was contacted from either the Department of Energy or NDOT [Nevada Department of Transportation]. ..."

"We're in a quandary because we haven't seen the routes or number of trips. We're completely

off-guard. We need to discuss this among ourselves."

Speight added that the city wants to know the safeguards that will be used and if they need contingency plans.

Joe Fiore, acting assistant manager for environmental restoration and waste management for the state's DOE office, said the majority of the low-level radioactive waste is being shipped on the southern route to avoid residential areas.

Most of the radioactive waste shipped to the Test Site comes from the eastern part of the United States. The northern route travels from Salt Lake City down Interstate 15 to either Craig or Cheyenne Roads then over to U.S. 95 to Tonopah.

The majority of the trucks hauling low-level nuclear waste use the southern route — from Kingman through Boulder City and Henderson and then on to the Interstate 515 to U.S. 95 to

Tonopah.

"We feel it is the preferred route because it avoids primary residential areas," Fiore said. "It's the designated truck route and avoids the center of the towns."

But the southern route travels past two mobile home parks in Boulder City and bisects the Mission Hills neighborhood in Henderson.

"This material is shipped with commercial trucking," Fiore said. "They like to take the most eco-

nomical routes and try to stay on interstate highways as much as possible. The southern route has more interstate and you also don't have to worry about winter as much."

He added that the low-level nuclear waste does not need special notification. "Nothing is being shipped that couldn't be shipped over any highway. We're

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talking about low-level radioactive waste. The material is such that the hazard doesn't even require the trucks to have placards."

The material is a solid and does not need unusual protection (remote controls) to clean it up, Fiore said.

Approximately 90% of the low-level nuclear waste is being transported on the southern route, he said, with an average of two trucks a day, five days a week.

Fiore said he didn't talk to Henderson or Boulder City officials because shipments have been coming from both routes for sev-

eral years. "We don't need special measures to notify people."

The Test Site has been receiving low-level nuclear waste since 1978.

One truck can haul 20-40 cubic yards depending on the material.

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