CONFERENCE OF RADIATION CONTROL PROGRAM DIRECTORS, INC.

RESOLUTION

Relating to: Transuranic Neutron Source Reclamation

WHEREAS: Tens of thousands of sealed sources could eventually become Greater-than-Class-C Low-Level Radioactive Waste, as estimated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and

WHEREAS: About 40% of these Greater-than-Class-C candidate sources involve the radionuclides plutonium and americium; and

WHEREAS: The consequences of leaving unwanted sources in the hands of the public until an interim storage facility and disposal capability are in place include an increasing neglect by some owners and associated risk of theft or abandonment, increasing risk of source rupture as they age (many are more than 20 years old), and consequent exposure of persons and contamination of property; and

WHEREAS: The responsibility for disposing of Greater-than-Class-C waste is assigned by the Low-Level Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1985 to the U.S. Department of Energy; and

WHEREAS: The current cost for development and operation associated with disposal of all Greater-than-Class-C waste has recently been estimated at $290 - $630 million, and the cost for closure and post-closure activities of the disposal site have been recently estimated at $1.4 - $2.0 billion; and

WHEREAS: At a cost of just several million dollars, the U.S. Department of Energy Defense Programs, through the Neutron Source Recovery Program at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, has so far collected, and reprocessed to extract the neutron emitter, several hundred Pu-239 sources and has scheduled more than 300 additional sources for acceptance during the next three years; and

WHEREAS: Several hundred neutron sources containing Pu-238 or Am-241 have also been identified, through broad public inquiries, as unwanted by their owners and as being of no other commercial interest except by refinement of the radioisotopes for safe, new applications; and

WHEREAS: The hazard of leaving unwanted plutonium and americium neutron sources in the hands of their owners could be significantly reduced by their retrieval and reprocessing; and

WHEREAS: Only laboratories of the U.S. Department of Energy could safely store and process such large numbers of Pu-238 and Am-241 neutron sources; and

WHEREAS: Acceptance of these sources from their owners by the U.S. Department of Energy would reduce the burden of Greater-than-Class C waste by precluding its generation;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc., lauds the efforts of the U.S. Department of Energy Defense Programs and the Neutron Source Recovery Program of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in dealing with unwanted, civilian owned Pu-239 neutron sources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc. urges the U.S. Department of Energy to expand its acceptance of unwanted transuranic neutron sources to include Pu-238 and Am-241.

Roland G. Fletcher
CRCPD Chairperson

Resolution Approved by CRCPD Membership on May 6, 1995