



A major project is about to be completed: Last shipment of high active waste from France to Germany

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GNS Gesellschaft für Nuklear-Service mbH is expecting the last shipment of high active waste from the reprocessing of German fuel assemblies in La Hague, France, due to arrive in Gorleben at the end of November 2011. The shipment includes eleven casks of the type CASTOR®HAW28M, each containing 28 HAW canisters with highly radioactive, vitrified waste from reprocessing.

This shipment brings an important chapter in German energy production history to a successful end. This is the twelfth shipment since 1996, bringing the number of HAW canisters delivered to the Gorleben interim storage facility to a total of 3,000. These stainless steel canisters contain the highly radioactive, heat-producing waste resulting from the recycling of fuel assemblies (HAW = "High Active Waste"). The fuel assemblies themselves have been shipped to reprocessing from German nuclear power plants until July 2005. The residual waste is enclosed in a glass matrix for safe storage and the glass body is put into stainless steel cylinders.

This summer, the last canisters were loaded into eleven casks of the type CASTOR® HAW28M at the La Hague reprocessing plant. This cask type was used already for last year's HAW shipment from La Hague.

The casks, each of which weighs about 120 tons, are first transported by truck from La Hague to the loading station of TN International in Valognes only a few kilometres away, where they are loaded onto railway freight cars. From Valognes, a train with the eleven casks runs to the GNS transfer station at Dannenberg in Lower Saxony where they are again transferred to trucks for the last 20 km to the Gorleben interim storage facility which is not connected to the railway system.

The measurements taken directly after loading in La Hague confirm that this year, as with all earlier shipments, the level of radiation to which the general public and the transport and accompanying personnel are expected to be exposed is far below the statutory limit values, and therefore there will be no hazard to man and the environment. Representatives from the Lower Saxon Ministry of the Environment were on site to confirm this.

The Federal Office for Radiation Protection (Bundesamt für Strahlenschutz, BfS) had already issued the transport licence on 1 June 2011. The approval to store the waste in Gorleben was given by the Ministry of the Environment of Lower Saxony on 8 November 2011. On completion of this shipment, a total of 113 casks with high active waste from reprocessing or spent fuel will be stored at the Gorleben interim storage facility.

The high active waste needs to cool down for about 20 to 30 years before it could be accepted at a final disposal facility. Therefore, interim storage of the waste would be necessary even if there already was a final disposal facility in operation.

Background:

Until 2005, reprocessing of the German fuel assemblies was the statutory disposal method. Accordingly, the German nuclear power station operators have concluded extensive contracts with the reprocessing companies AREVA NC in France and BNGS in Great Britain. In addition to the reusable nuclear fuel, during reprocessing also high active waste is produced. Germany is obliged take back its waste. Agreements have been concluded between Germany and France / Great Britain. The companies involved are also contractually obliged to take the waste back.

All federal governments have also confirmed to this day the necessity to return the radioactive waste from France and Great Britain.

Expected to begin in 2014, another 21 CASTOR® HAW28M casks with vitrified waste containers from the British reprocessing plant at Sellafield will be transported to Germany in four shipments. The return of all HAW canisters from the reprocessing of German fuel assemblies is to be completed by 2017.

This press release contains forward-looking statements made as of the date of its publication. These statements may not be consistent with subsequent events not covered in this press release.

For further informations:

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