



Honoring an Extraordinary Federal Government Author: Books About the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission by J. Samuel Walker

J. Samuel Walker is the official historian of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He has written books about the history of the Commission that are both scholarly and are also good reads. These are those books, which may be available at an FDLP library near you.

When we recently received and processed **The Road to Yucca Mountain**, I looked through it and noticed an outstanding feature about it that's too often missing in federal government publications: it's not only a detailed history of an important component in the history of nuclear power in our nation, it's a fascinating book in itself. It's the type of book that I would expect to see for sale in a bookstore. Like all of Mr. Walker's books, it is an historical account of our nation's nuclear energy program written by an insider within the agency. It couldn't be more authoritative.

Some interesting details you'll learn from this book:

- The first plans for an "atomic garbage dump" would have located this site in an abandoned salt mine in Lyons, Kansas.
- As public attitudes toward nuclear waste disposal changed from relative indifference to alarm, critics of the Commission charged that no waste disposal site anywhere would be safe. One critic, Sheldon Novick in his book *The Careless Atom*, stated that the commission's waste disposal program at the Hanford, Washington site "...constitute[d] a hazard which could only be compared to nuclear war."
- Regulations on shipping radioactive wastes that the U.S. Department of Transportation issued on January 13, 1980 would have overruled local and state laws prohibiting or restricting nuclear shipments. It would have designated interstate highways as the major means of moving nuclear wastes. DOT received over 1,000 public comments on this proposed regulation, which went into effect almost as proposed. The Supreme Court gave a final approval to the regulation, which is in effect today.

All of Samuel Walker's books have this amount of interesting detail in them, and in a state such as Oklahoma, in which we are currently considering the possibility of building a nuclear power plant beside one of our major lakes, these works are relevant.

With the exception of the 1993 title, the following books were all published by the University of California Press in association with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and were made available to Depository Libraries of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). Also with the exception of the 1983 title, all are hardbound and contain scholarly footnotes and detailed indexes. All but the early title can be purchased from the University of California Press.

1986 Controlling the Atom; The Beginnings of Nuclear Regulation, 1946 – 1962 Sudocs class number: Y 3.N 88:2 At 7. Co-written with George T. Mazuzan. xiii, 533p.

This first book is said to be the first comprehensive account of the early history of nuclear radiation in our nation. This examines the very beginning of regulating the nuclear energy industry.

1993 A Short History of Nuclear Regulation, 1946 – 1990 Sudocs class number: Y 3.N88:31/175; revised in 2000 in microfiche format, Sudocs class number: Y 3.N88:31/175/Rev. 1 This is published by the NRC. v, 56p.; the 2000 revision is 70p.

This 40+ year history begins in 1946, when the agency was created as the Atomic Energy Commission, through their current name and status as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This short history makes one thing clear: it has always been an embattled agency.

1992 Containing the Atom; Nuclear Regulation in a Changing Environment, 1963- 1971 Sudocs class number: Y 3.N88:2 At 7/2 xiii, 533p.

How does our government regulate nuclear energy? From regulating uranium mines to regulating reactors to dealing with nuclear disasters, this continues to be a big challenge.

2000 **Permissible Dose; A History of Radiation Protection in the Twentieth Century**

Sudocs class number: Y 3.N 88:2 D 74 xii, 168p.

How much radiation can our bodies take? In 1973, a critic of all things nuclear, E.F. Schumacher, said in his book *Small is Beautiful* that radiation is “the most serious agent of pollution of the environment and the greatest threat to man’s survival on earth.” So how has the Commission tried to regulate human exposure? Typical of the public perception of this problem was a cover of *Newsweek* in April 1976 that showed a photograph of a mother holding her two children, along with a poster that read: “What do you do in case of a nuclear accident? Kiss your children goodbye.”

2004 **Three Mile Island; A Nuclear Crisis In Historical Perspective** Sudocs class number: Y 3.N 88:2

T 41 xi, 303p. In case you think that Three Mile Island is history, you should remember that on November 20, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. this facility leaked enough radiation to expose a worker there to 16 millirem of radiation exposure. The annual dose limit for these workers is 2000 millirem.

2009 **The Road to Yucca Mountain; The Development of Radioactive Waste Policy in the United States**

Sudocs class number: Y 3.N 88:2 Y 9 xi, 228p.