

The National Association of Neighborhoods

Nuclear Waste - A clean renewable Energy Source



Last summer, the National Association of Neighborhoods (NAN) participated in a fact-finding mission to learn more about “new” nuclear technology. NAN and three other social and economic advocacy organizations traveled as a delegation to France at the invitation of AREVA, a global nuclear and renewable energy company. The objective of the trip was for the members of the delegation to learn more about “new nuclear energy” and nuclear recycling technology. NAN has made energy policy a priority because of the health, economic and environmental impact it has on neighborhoods and communities across the country. Since the 1970’s, 80% of France’s electricity is generated through the use of nuclear power.

The AREVA site visit gave NAN and the other advocacy organizations an opportunity to have an up-close and personal view of France’s nuclear industry, how their recycling and reprocessing plants operate and most importantly, how new technological advancements have begun to alter the outdated perceptions that many people have historically believed about nuclear power. The delegation also had the opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions about public health, jobs and diversity, safety concerns, plant security and the impact of nuclear energy on neighborhoods of color with many AREVA executives.



Clean Energy - Yes we can

Along with NAN, other participating members of this advocacy delegation included: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI).

The itinerary included a private meeting in Paris, at AREVA’s headquarters, with Ms. Anne Lauvergeon, the CEO of AREVA Inc followed by an afternoon with AREVA engineers and sustainable development managers. The delegation observed the back-end of France’s nuclear

operations, learning more about AREVA's programs, corporate culture, training, technology and management.

The tour continued, heading three hours northwest to the Normandy region of France to AREVA NC's La Hague facilities. At La Hague, the group learned more about the recycling of spent fuel and ultimate vitrification (the process of converting materials to glass) and storage of second generation spent fuel in its final solid form. The group watched cask unloading in the parking area, the robotic unloading facilities, witnessed a pool of spent fuel being cooled, the aforementioned storage facilities of solid fuel, and lastly, visited the control room of AREVA's UP3 plant.

We then met for lunch with several local community leaders to discuss nuclear energy and their experiences with AREVA. Mr. Michel Canoville, President of the Community of Districts for La Manche (the region in Normandy) and Mr. Camus, the President of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry, were in attendance. The local members of the community assured us of AREVA's commitment to being a good corporate neighbour, aggressively transparent, accountable and proactive, regarding safety and health issues.

On the final day of the tour, the delegation headed south, to AREVA's MELOX facility near Avignon, in southeast France. The group observed how nuclear waste is recycled into reusable energy, and how AREVA's workforce, neighbors, communities and environment are protected.

Suited up in protective gear, the delegation saw an up-close and personal view of advanced recycling technology. What makes this facility so unique is that it recycles waste products into reusable energy products – specifically the remaining plutonium (1%) from the used fuel process that the group observed in La Hague - into a new generation of reusable energy called MOX fuel – a combined mixture of uranium and plutonium oxides – for use in power facilities. Guided by expert engineers, the delegation was educated about the manufacturing and inspection process of MOX fuel assembly.

Our next stop on the guided tour brought us to the control room, the place where the engineers and the workforce undergo considerable training, apprenticeships, and ongoing workforce development. These technicians execute, monitor and oversee the assembly, production and safety of workers.

Ricardo Byrd, Executive Director of NAN, stated, "...for America's neighborhoods, small and big businesses to thrive globally, now is the time to include a greater role for "new" nuclear energy in the nation's energy policy." He further stated, "...reprocessing nuclear waste into fuel is a good way to reduce the growing volume of nuclear waste being stored near many neighborhoods. Nuclear energy is clean, affordable and safe."