

The Thumb

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Heads up: If radioactive waste from another country was going to be dumped in your backyard, you'd want some warning, right? Lights, bells, whistles, sirens, maybe official notification on the emergency broadcast system. But it's been happening to Utah without so much as a courtesy call from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Amazingly, small shipments of low-level radioactive waste from foreign countries have been buried at EnergySolutions' disposal facility in Tooele County without the knowledge of state officials or regional regulators. While it's the NRC's policy to inform the Utah Division of Radiation Control and the Northwest Compact of applications to import large amounts of waste, the agency had the audacity to think that smaller shipments weren't worth mentioning.

Now, after getting a well-deserved earful from state and compact officials, the NRC has promised to keep the state and the compact in the loop on all import applications, regardless of the volume of the waste. That's nice. But promises can be broken. The NRC needs to make official notification an official regulation - now.

Mark it with a "B": U.S. Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah, a powerful member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, always kept the recipients of his budget earmarks for defense contractors a secret. Until now. A miscommunication that led Bennett to believe that all members of a subcommittee were disclosing their earmarks resulted in Bennett identifying the recipients of 24 requests worth \$54.2 million. As it turns out, disclosure was optional. But when the sky didn't fall, Bennett had a change of heart. From now on, a Bennett staffer said, the senator will be disclosing his earmark recipients. It's about time. You deserve to know where your tax dollars are being spent.

Take a bow: Park City school teacher Melissa Bott and Utah health-care reform advocate Judi Hilman have been honored by national organizations. Hilman, executive director of the Utah Health Policy Project, received a Community Health Leaders Award for 2008 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for her dogged efforts to provide affordable, quality health care for all Utahns. Bott, a reading specialist at McPolin Elementary, won the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award for helping develop and implement the school's acclaimed literacy program. Kudos.