

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: 10-23-17
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Mark Gaillard, Fire Chief
CC:
SUBJECT: Flagstaff Fire Department response to Transportation of Uranium Ore Millings/Soil

Council requested information regarding the Flagstaff Fire Departments state of readiness and ability to handle an incident related to the transportation of Uranium Ore Millings/Soil. (This memo has been revised to address specific questions posed by Councilmember Putzova if any member of the City Council would like to meet with Fire department staff regarding this information please contact me.)

The Flagstaff Fire Department is the primary Hazardous Materials team for the Northern AZ region. We staff daily personnel who are qualified Hazardous Material Technicians. We have equipment that will allow us to detect radiation levels, deal with mitigation needs, including the treatment of anyone injured should an accident occur. If an accident occurred, the Fire Department has the capability to evaluate, treat, and assist with any containment issues.

Regarding mitigation needs; we are versed in the lower level hazards associated with this shipment and have plans in place to deal with accidental circumstances. The hazards represented by the liquids from the vehicles (diesel fuel, oil, battery acid and radiator fluids) are as much concern as the load of ore millings. Specific to the uranium ore millings (which is a naturally formed element), the U.S. DOT places this mined dirt as a "low specific activity" hazard. This simply means it is the lowest level of risk for radioactive material and only emits alpha particles 1-2" beyond the immediate source. The most likely action plan would be to contain and cover the material with a tarp to keep it from becoming airborne due to higher wind activity in our region. Once covered, the hazard is mitigated and the general public would not be allowed to access the millings.

All clean up processes would be completed by an outside contractor provided by the shipper. The Flagstaff Fire Department will not perform clean up, but can come in to utilize detection equipment to ensure the area has no measurable radioactive hazards.

The Flagstaff Fire Department would love to provide a tour of our special operations capability to the Mayor and Council. Please contact me if you would like to tour our stations, equipment and staff that routinely prepare and respond to incidents of a technical rescue and/or hazardous materials response.

Source: Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances, Disease Registry and Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Department of Transportation.