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**Southeast Compact Commission Adopts Policy Statement
On Radiation Control In The United States**

-- Commission Urges National Policy on Ionizing Radiation --

RALEIGH, N.C. – The Southeast Compact Commission for Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management (the Commission) has adopted a policy statement recommending that the United States Congress enact legislation establishing a national policy in regard to ionizing radiation, including the management of radioactive waste. The policy statement notes that, “such legislation should establish a common goal that users and regulators could support and work towards and would designate a plan of action and responsibility for achieving the goal.”

The term “ionizing radiation” refers to radiation that has sufficient energy to remove electrons from the electron cloud of an atom. It has many practical uses in industry, medicine, research, construction, and other areas, but presents a health hazard if used improperly. Radioactive waste is a by-product of the use of radioactive materials.

“There is no one federal agency responsible for regulating all ionizing radiation, and therefore regulations are fragmented or non-existent in some areas. This makes it more difficult for states to safely regulate all sources of ionizing radiation,” said Michael Mobley, Chairman of the Commission. “If we address all radioactive materials across the board and the waste that is generated from them, we will protect public health and the environment to a greater extent than we do now.”

Kirk Whatley, Commissioner for Alabama, explained, “There is no coherent national policy on ionizing radiation and therefore some things we do in the United States make no sense—there is no consistent policy for managing all sources of ionizing radiation. Sources of ionizing radiation are managed inconsistently from state to state and within federal agencies, with some sources not being regulated at all.”

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Mobley further stated, “As noted by Commissioner Whatley, at the national level we regulate some sources of radiation as if they were the ultimate danger while totally ignoring other sources of radiation that in many cases present a greater risk to the public and environment. This, of course, creates an expenditure of funds and effort to provide protection to the public from certain sources that is far in excess to the danger they present while other sources that present a greater risk to the public are virtually ignored.”

The Commission is not suggesting that Congress in any way alter the existing Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act (the Act). Rather, a rational national policy would strengthen the ability of all compacts and states to meet their responsibilities under the Act.

The Southeast Compact for Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management is an agreement among six states -- Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia -- to provide for the responsible management of the region's low-level radioactive waste (LLRW). The Compact Commission oversees administration of the Compact.

LLRW is commonly found in industrial and research by-products that have been exposed to radioactivity. Sources include such items as discarded containers, tools, and uniforms used in the operation of nuclear power plants, the medical industry, hospitals, and universities. All LLRW can be safely and responsibly managed and disposed.

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