



LALP-95-149

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Proposed Site Treatment Plan for Managing Mixed Waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Background

Congress passed the Federal Facility Compliance Act (FFCA) in 1992. It was passed in an effort to require federal agencies, such as the US Department of Energy (DOE), to develop better strategies for treating and disposing of mixed waste at facilities managed by federal agencies. (Mixed wastes are those that contain both hazardous and radioactive components.)

The FFCA requires each DOE facility—including Los Alamos National Laboratory—to negotiate a site treatment plan with the state in which the facility is located. The plan must specify how and when mixed waste will be treated.

The Laboratory submitted a Draft Plan to the DOE in August 1994 and spent the next several months reviewing the plan with the public.

Subsequent to the submittal of the Proposed Site Treatment Plan in March 1995, DOE has been unable to find funding for the Controlled-Air Incinerator starting in 1997. Discussions with regulators on the likelihood of closure are just now beginning. If incineration is still required for some waste, it is becoming apparent that the Laboratory will have to rely on off-site DOE or commercial facilities.

Draft Site Treatment Plan Summary

The Draft Plan included four basic strategies for managing the mixed waste inventory:

- Commercial off-site treatment—sending certain waste types to private, commercial facilities that are licensed to accept them. This strategy requires transporting waste from the Laboratory.
- Controlled-Air Incinerator.
- Hazardous Waste Treatment Facility—housing portable treatment systems called “skids” in specifically designed treatment rooms. Several different skids can be developed to treat different waste types. The skids can then be decontaminated and either moved into storage or to another DOE facility.
- The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)—storing certain waste types in this long-term storage facility in southern New Mexico. The current DOE policy is that certain mixed waste will go to WIPP and the Draft Site Treatment Plan reflects this policy. The State of New Mexico has taken the position that DOE must have another option for mixed waste destined for WIPP, should WIPP not open or the opening be delayed.



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