



Department of Energy

Carlsbad Area Office
P. O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

JUN 22 2000

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RECEIVED

Steve Zappe
New Mexico Environment Department
Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau
2044A Galisteo St.
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502

Subject: CHANGE OF REPOSITORY DISPOSAL HORIZON WITHIN PERMIT LIMITS

Dear Mr. Zappe:

The purpose of this letter is to inform the New Mexico Environment Department, Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau, of a change in repository disposal horizon to be used in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The WIPP plans to raise the disposal horizon within the disposal horizon envelope such that the roof of future excavations is at Clay G.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant intensively monitors the geomechanical behavior of its underground excavations. There is considerable evidence that raising the repository horizon slightly, so that the roof is initially cut at clay seam G, reduces the rate of roof to floor convergence and slows the development of fracturing in the immediate roof. This reduces the rate at which ground conditions deteriorate, thus reducing the amount of ground control maintenance required to minimize health and safety risks during mining and waste handling operations.

The disposal horizon will remain within the disposal horizon envelope identified in Attachment M3 of the WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit, number NM4890139088-TSDF . Note 4 on permit Drawing 51-W-214-W states: "Disposal horizon may be selected within the envelope based on geomechanical, operational, and safety considerations." Raising the disposal horizon will improve geomechanical behavior, facilitate mining operations, and ground conditions will be improved and considerably less maintenance will be required to assure optimum ground conditions.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 505-234-7462.

Sincerely,

H. L. Plum
RCRA Permit Manager

cc: James Bearzi
John Kieling

CAO:ORC:HLP:VW:00-0097 UFC:5486



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