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September 11, 2000

Steve Zappe  
New Mexico Environmental Department  
2044-A Galisteo Street  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505



Dear Mr. Zappe:

I am writing this letter in support of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico in regard to their request for RCRA Class II permit modification.

My name is Deborah J. Schenck. I am a Medical Doctor, board certified in Occupational Medicine. I also hold a Masters degree in Environmental and Preventive medicine. I currently practice Occupational Medicine in Carlsbad, New Mexico and function as the Occupational Medical Director for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. My home is in Carlsbad and my family, including my grandchildren, live in Hobbs and Lovington, New Mexico. In addition to subcontracting as the occupational medical director for the WIPP, I also serve most of the industries and businesses in Carlsbad and the surrounding area from my industrial medicine practice in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

As an occupational, environmental and preventive medicine specialist, my concern is not only for the safety and health of the workers of my area, including those at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, but also all the citizens of my community, of New Mexico and of the United States as a whole.

Safety deals primarily with processes. From the viewpoint of safety in any properly designed process, the fewer the steps and the fewer people involved, the safer (and more cost effective) the process.

While adding waste characterization to the WIPP site functions will result in some increased risk of exposure to a small number of WIPP waste handlers, decreasing the number of sites at which waste characterization is performed will result in an overall decrease in the risk of

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Page 2

worker and community exposure, in addition to expediting waste removal from areas which are much closer to large population centers than the WIPP. Centralized waste characterization will also facilitate monitoring and overseeing of the process by regulatory agencies, including the New Mexico Environment Department. The enhanced ability of the New Mexico Environment Department (who is directly responsible to the citizens of New Mexico) to oversee the characterization process will also serve to reassure the people of New Mexico that what the generator and storage sites say is in the waste they are sending to Carlsbad is in fact what is being disposed of in our state. As Occupational Medical Director for the WIPP site, I work closely with the Safety and Industrial Hygiene Departments. The WIPP has an exemplary safety record and I have no doubt that the waste characterization process will have worker and community safety as its #1 priority. There is also a well designed plan in place in the unlikely event of a worker exposure.

In conclusion, I believe that performing centralized waste characterization at the WIPP site will expedite the disposal process, decrease costs significantly and, most importantly, reduce the risk of exposure for workers and communities in general.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DJSchenck', written in a cursive style.

Deborah J. Schenck, M.D., M.S.  
Medical Director, Industrial Health Services  
Carlsbad, New Mexico

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