

09/28/2000, Thursday

Zappe



To Steve Zappe,

Here is the letter to the editor
that I told you about on a proposed
nuclear waste permit change.

Fake Come,
Marina Day

Last month Westinghouse and the Department of Energy proposed more modifications to the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

This time DOE is asking the New Mexico Environment Department for permission to ship radioactive and hazardous chemical waste based on DOE's "acceptable knowledge" (i.e., without full characterization) of those wastes until they can do inspections at the WIPP site itself.

On Feb. 22, 1999, at the state WIPP-permit hearings, Robert F. Kehrman of Westinghouse said on record, "We never open waste containers that are received from an offsite generator. By not opening the waste, we can eliminate the possibility of spreading contamination throughout the facility. So not opening the containers, keeping the containers sealed, is a major — a major — strategy in our protection of human health and the environment."

What happened to this major strategy to protect human health and the environment?

Under current permit rules, waste barrels that are being found to contain high-level radioactive waste, explosives, liquids, ignitable, corrosive, reactive or chemically incompatible wastes would not travel on highways or be stored at WIPP. Under the proposed new rules, these substances could be on our highways, not to be discovered until after they arrived at WIPP.

The DOE/Westinghouse proposed permit modifications are *major* permit changes. Mr. Kehrman's testimony is evidence that they know how risky these changes are to the environment and our safety. Even more outrageous, DOE has requested that these permit changes be considered a Class II modification, which excludes the public from the right to ask DOE for its justification for these changes. NMED should reject this proposal outright. If NMED does consider these changes at all, it should at least use the Class III process and make DOE justify the proposal to the public.

The New Mexican
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steering-committee member
Nuclear Watch of New Mexico
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via e-mail

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