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Subject: RE: Request for information at RFETS

Date: Tue, 13 Feb 2001 16:19:13 -0700

From: "Plum, Jody - DOE" <plumj@wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>

To: "'Steve_Zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us'" <Steve_Zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us>

CC: "Triay, Ines - DOE" <TriayI@wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>, "Kehrman, Bob" <KehrmaB@wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>, "Watson, Kerry - DOE" <WatsonK@wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>

Our response is attached regarding the two questions in this e-mail. If you have any questions, please contact me.

-----Original Message-----

From: Steve Zappe [mailto:Steve_Zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us]

Sent: Thursday, February 08, 2001 11:44 AM

To: Plum, Jody - DOE

Cc: Kehrman, Bob; Will Fetner; Steve Holmes; Connie Walker

Subject: Request for information at RFETS

Jody, Bob -

I had an inquiry from Don Hancock yesterday regarding activities he observed at RFETS last week while he was visiting the site. In an attempt to understand his concerns, could you provide any additional information you may have on the following two topics?

1. Don observed drums which he said had undergone tomography, and he was told that these containers were being prepared for shipment to WIPP. This activity was being performed in Building 371, Room 3420. He said containers were arranged in groups of 14 drums as if they were being prepped for loading. The date for tomography appeared to be during the period of January 25 - 29, 2001. He didn't have the person's name, but said he spoke with the assistant manager of Building 371 about these activities, and to this individual's knowledge the waste was "ready to ship."

For this issue, could you please:

- confirm or clarify the information I've relayed to you
- identify the waste stream being characterized/stored in this location
- identify what other characterization may have been performed on this waste
- provide any other information which may be useful to understanding this issue

2. The DNFSB issued a report <www.dnfsb.gov/weekly/rf/2001/rf011201.PDF> regarding RFETS waste on January 12, 2001 which said:

"Transuranic (TRU) Waste Management: For some time, RFETS has been advocating that TRU waste containing contaminated, classified parts and

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shapes be disposed at WIPP (see the May 26, 2000 site rep. report) <<http://www.dnfsb.gov/weekly/rf/2000/rf052600.PDF>>. This would provide substantial reduction in waste preparation/declassification efforts at RFETS (e.g., crushing and size reduction in a glovebox) thereby reducing worker exposure and other risks. Efforts by RFETS, WIPP and DOE Headquarters have resulted in recent approval of the security plan for shipment and disposal of TRU waste containing such classified parts/shapes at WIPP. RFETS is proceeding with packaging of such parts/shapes for disposal at WIPP. (3-A)"

Don said he spoke with Mark Spears from Kaiser Hill regarding material with high FGE that was repackaged 12/6/00, and he was wondering if this might be a part of the classified waste stream.

For this issue, could you please:

- either provide a copy of the approved "security plan for shipment and disposal", or if that isn't feasible, summarize the relevant points regarding WIPP's role in the receipt and disposal of such classified waste
- clarify how classified wastes will undergo the characterization process currently required under the permit -OR- what modifications to the permit may be requested to accommodate any special concerns DOE has regarding classified waste
- provide a status on how "RFETS is proceeding with packaging of such parts/shapes for disposal at WIPP."
- explain how NMED will know when this waste is ready for disposal (i.e., submittal of a WSPF)

If you need this request formalized in an official letter, please let me know. Thanks!

Steve

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The following is in response to Question No. 1 of your e-mail dated February 8, 2001:

Regarding your questions raised by comments from Don Hancock after a site visit he made to RFETS, I am unable to respond because I do not know enough about the facts. In every instance, the generator should have been able to both accurately and properly respond to each of the questions at the time Mr. Hancock made his observations. For me to speak for RFETS at this time without knowing the specifics or having been there is inappropriate. I suggest you advise Mr. Hancock to contact RFETS to obtain answers to his questions.

The following is in response to Question No. 2 of your e-mail dated February 8, 2001:

Steve, in response to your question regarding the disposal of TRU contaminated, classified parts and shapes I can provide the following response. A Security Plan has been completed. This document is, however, a Security Plan, and as such, not available for public dissemination and review and is maintained as a secure document. This document needed to be completed as a basis for use when considering disposal options prior to a final decision being made regarding which option(s) for disposal are the preferred path forward. It was not completed for immediate implementation, as no final decision has been made regarding the disposition of the items in question. WIPP is being considered as one possible disposal option, it is not, however, the only disposal option, and it may well not be the most attractive option after consideration of all factors. Numerous factors are being considered, not the least of which is the life cycle cost of any given option. Other options that are being considered include sanitation of these items at the site where they are currently stored, sanitation at a centralized facility, as well as various destruction technologies. As you are aware this is an extremely sensitive issue due to the concerns for national security and any decision will require considerable review and internal DOE discussion prior to a decision being made regarding the best option(s). Due to the variety of materials and sites involved, it is highly probable that several options may be selected. As we are very early in the decision process, it is not possible to state what decision(s) may be made or whether or not WIPP will play any role in disposal of this material. Ultimately, this is a decision to be made by DOE/HQ. In the event WIPP is chosen as a preferred option, we will then complete any required actions to meet permit conditions or seek appropriate modifications.