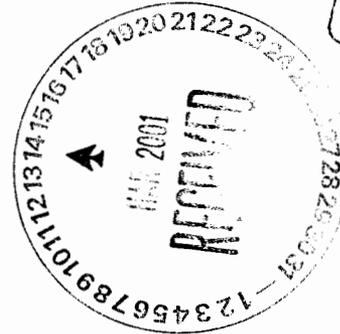


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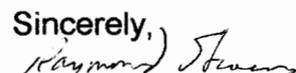
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re: Comments on DOE Public Information Meeting of 3/8/01

I attended the early session of the DOE meeting on proposed changes to the RCRA permit to eliminate routine visual examination of waste containers by facilities that install the new digital radiography/computer tomography system to characterize the contents of the waste drums.

On the surface it appears to be a commendable request since it would lessen the possibilities of accidental contamination of waste handling personnel and lower the amount of waste for WIPP that is generated by the VE process itself. In addition I was wondering if DOE has considered refining the process to more accurately evaluate the digital data to the point of being able to identify toxic substances in the waste drums rather than merely using this as a more sophisticated radiographic scan for unwanted objects?

I have several concerns, however, that I hope will be considered by NMED before coming to a final decision on granting this modification. I have been following the WIPP project more or less consistently since it was first reported as a possible solution the nuclear waste problem years ago. During this period of time I have watched the DOE and it's contractors twist and distort the truth, evade important issues, and only say what they think they can get away with while withholding pertinent information from the public. In a word they have constantly and consistently lied to the public to hide their real motives and capabilities in order to get the WIPP site opened and operating. News reports now talk of possible changes in the permit to do all of the waste characterization at the WIPP site and of using WIPP as the single waste site for all nuclear waste. I think NMED should be very cautious in granting any exceptions to the RCRA permit until all of the facts about the Government's plans for the future of the WIPP site are out in the open and subject to public scrutiny. If the DOE is really concerned about worker safety they could do the visual examinations with the remote handling technology already available at the generating sites. If it is decided that this modification to the permit is worth pursuing on it's own I think NMED should not grant the exception until DOE presents a plan to install this new technology in all of the generator sites, where it would be appropriate, including a funding plan with the money in the bank before they begin.

Sincerely,

Raymond Stevens

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