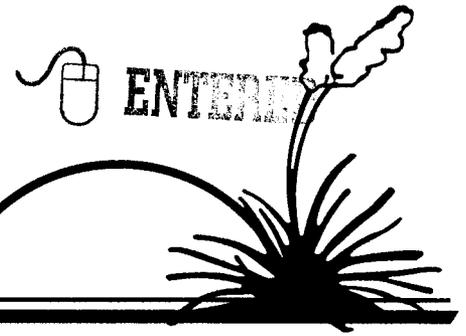


CARD

Citizens For Alternatives To Radioactive Dumping

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Comments on the Department of Energy's Proposed Class 2 Modifications to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Hazardous Waste Operating Permit:

This modification request consists of 5 separate proposed modifications. They will be addressed individually below.

1. Training Requirements for Firefighters

CARD has no objection to this modification if the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) feels the number of hours proposed by the Department of Energy (DOE) is adequate.

2. Training Requirements for Radiation Control Technicians

CARD has no objection to this modification.

3. Modification of Procedure Requirements.

CARD urges NMED to deny this modification request. Currently DOE must notify NMED whenever changes are made to inspection logs and forms since these changes are Class I modifications. Although most of these changes are probably minor, occasionally they could be significant. During the permit hearing DOE wanted to change items on one of the audit checklists and NMED objected, saying that these items were significant. There could be similarly important items on these logs and forms. Without notification, NMED would not know of these changes until the next audit, if then. In the meantime, DOE would be doing its own inspections etc. using inadequate checklists or forms. Simply notifying NMED of these changes is not an additional burden on DOE, but is what they should be doing.

4. Addition of Hazardous Waste Numbers

CARD urges NMED to deny this modification request because it is incomplete, occasionally inaccurate and sufficiently complex to require the full Class III procedure.

Class III Procedure

010516



Addition of these waste numbers requires changes throughout various parts of the permit. Including, but not limited to Table II.C.4, Attachment B, and section II.C.3. At least six of these items are currently prohibited at WIPP and would require exceptions to be written into the TSDF-WAC. Even though DOE claims that all characteristics will no longer exist after treatment, technically these items are still prohibited for their characteristics. Possibly changes would have to be made to various checklists as well. (Would these last changes fall under number 3 above?)

Incomplete

The modification is incomplete because DOE gives little information to support their many claims that essentially nothing will really change with this modification and all liquids and characteristics will be gone. There is no risk assessment on any of these items and no description of the procedures which will remove the free liquids or neutralize the characteristics. Therefore it is impossible to tell with certainty if these items will truly be gone. Although most of these items are characterized in some way for some part of the waste coming to WIPP now, it is often done on a different wastefrom (VOCs instead of the pure chemical or the solidified pure chemical or the supposedly neutralized chemical, for instance) Also, DOE states that most of these items are already being analyzed for Summary Category Groups S3000 and S4000 which means they are NOT being analyzed for Debris Waste. These items could become components in a Debris Waste container and would not therefore necessarily be checked to see if they truly have been removed from the waste.

Because the waste forms of these chemicals and metals are different from those already permitted at WIPP under different codes, the compatibility studies already done for the permitted waste number do not adequately represent this new waste. DOE should have provided actual data instead of vague statements to show that compatibility exists with these wastes in these forms coming from these processes.

Even with adequate treatment to remove the characteristics and free liquids, the permit allows 1% or 0.5 gallons of residual free liquid to remain in the waste container. All the currently prohibited items in this request appear to be liquids. 0.5 gallons of an ignitable or corrosive liquid in a container could have some very negative consequences for the repository. So technically, DOE might be able to say the characteristic would no longer exist in the waste when in reality danger still existed. (In fact, for Hexachlorobutadiene they admit that 0.5 gallons of this acutely toxic liquid could remain in the waste container.) Certain characteristic waste was prohibited from WIPP for a reason and that prohibition should be continued.

Two of the items in the request are new chemicals which have not undergone compatibility studies at all. **Hexachlorobutadiene (D033)** is a toxic liquid. It is simply stated that this will require solidification or stabilization prior to shipment to WIPP. What will be done to it, and the waste form it will become is not exactly described. DOE states that they have evaluated *similar* semivolatiles relative to WIPP so they have no real data on this chemical to prove its safety at WIPP. As noted above, DOE admits that this chemical can occur as a residual liquid so it may not actually all be removed from the waste.

Hydrofluoric Acid (U134) is a toxic liquid which DOE says will come to WIPP as a solid. Again there is no data to back up any of their claims for this item. They state that this will become aluminum fluoride and neutralized nitric acid (will the nitric acid be in the waste as well?) and that it is significantly less toxic than "other fluoride compounds" and that it will no longer exhibit either the corrosive or toxic characteristic. Where are the studies and analyses to back this up? Although all the items in this request need more information, these completely new waste items are particularly deficient in this area.

For some of the chemicals and metals DOE states that there are only a few drums (or only 1 drum in the case of hydrofluoric acid) that they want to bring to WIPP. In addition they claim that they want to add the new waste numbers specifically for waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Idaho National Environmental and Engineering Laboratory and the Savannah River Site. However, their modification request does not actually limit the addition of waste numbers to these sites. Which do they mean? Either way, the request is incomplete because it does not accurately describe what they want nor does it accurately describe the changes that should be added to various parts of the permit. The applicants obviously weren't aware of the items in this request in the past and there is nothing to indicate that there could *not* be many more drums of these hazardous wastes in the inventory. NMED must assume that if they add these waste numbers to the WIPP WAC that large quantities of these chemicals and metals *could* come to WIPP.

Inaccurate

There were several inaccuracies in this application. The description of Vinyl Chloride (U043) said it is a gas and that because of venting "...no gaseous vinyl chloride will be present in the SRS waste containers..." However, there could be Vinyl Chloride gas inside sealed inner containers. Also, will this gas have time to diffuse completely out of the drum no matter how many layers of plastic bags it is inside with the current or newly proposed DAC? DOE cannot accurately make the statement that no gaseous vinyl chloride will be present after venting. DOE also described mercury as both a solid and a liquid in different places in the application. Although it is easy to see why this confusion exists for mercury, nevertheless, it is just one more example of their inattention to detail that makes this application incomplete.

5. Groundwater Reporting Requirements

CARD has no objection to this modification.

Sincerely,



Deborah Reade
Research Director
CARD