



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460



June 11, 2003

Dr. Inés R. Triay, Manager
Carlsbad Field Office
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, NM 88221

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION



Dear Dr. Triay:

I am writing in response to your letter of May 20, 2003. In that letter, you provided information regarding certain uncompacted (or uncompressed) wastes processed by the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory's (INEEL) Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP) and requested approval to dispose of such wastes at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

The Department of Energy (DOE) initially requested approval to dispose of both uncompressed and supercompacted waste from the AMWTP in your letter dated December 10, 2002. In our March 21, 2003, response, we requested additional information regarding the waste inventory and potential long-term effects of waste characteristics related to the AMWTP waste, particularly for supercompacted waste. In addition, we recommended that you divide future submissions into one related to the uncompressed waste and one related to the supercompacted waste. This letter addresses only uncompressed wastes processed at the AMWTP that DOE would like to dispose in the WIPP and that are the subject of your May 20, 2003, letter. The Environmental Protection Agency has completed its review of the additional information you provided on the nature of the uncompressed waste from that facility.

In our previous response to your December 10, 2002, letter, we stated that "the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) needs to clearly demonstrate that the new AMWTP waste is equivalent to the existing waste inventory in that the quantities of the inventory and the properties of the inventory are equivalent." In addition, we suggested that you provide sufficient additional information to verify that this waste has equivalent characteristics to the waste included in the original certification performance assessment and contains less than the inventory values (of radionuclides and cellulose, plastics and rubbers (CPR)) used in those calculations.

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In your May 2003, letter you provided information that described the AMWTP waste according to the waste stream classification used in the Compliance Certification Application (CCA) and identified whether a given waste stream will be uncompressed or is a candidate for supercompaction. Additional information, on the quantities of the major components (radionuclides, CPR) of the waste, indicates that the major components are within the inventory limits established in the CCA. This information confirms that any major changes in the inventory would be attributable to the waste designated for supercompaction.

Based on the documentation that 1) identifies the general waste stream characteristics and 2) establishes that the waste streams are subsets of the classifications used in the CCA, we have determined that the uncompressed waste that will be processed at the AMWTP facility is encompassed by existing waste streams and is expected to have characteristics equivalent to waste accounted for in the CCA. Therefore, with this letter, the Agency approves AMWTP uncompressed waste for disposal at WIPP once the appropriate waste characterization and other related requirements have been met.

Supercompacted wastes processed at the AMWTP are not approved for disposal at this time. As discussed in your May 2003, letter, we expect that you will submit separate information related to potential long-term performance impacts of supercompacted waste in the WIPP. We will evaluate any such analysis before making a decision regarding the disposal supercompacted waste from AMWTP at the WIPP.

If you have any questions, please contact Betsy Forinash at (202) 564-9310.

Sincerely,



Frank Marcinowski, Director
Radiation Protection Division

cc: WIPP Team
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