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February 1, 2018

Mr. Ricardo Maestas
New Mexico Environment Department
Hazardous Waste Bureau
2905 Rodeo Park Drive E, Building 1
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505

Via e-mail to: Ricardo.Maestas@state.nm.us

Re: Class 2 Permit Modification Request - Training Program Revision and Changes Due to Construction and Operation of a New Filter Building

Dear Ricardo,

We respectfully submit these comments to ***Class 2 Permit Modification Request - Training Program Revision and Changes Due to Construction and Operation of a New Filter Building*** at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, November 2017.

Nuclear Watch New Mexico seeks to promote safety and environmental protection at nuclear facilities; mission diversification away from nuclear weapons programs; greater accountability and cleanup in the nation-wide nuclear weapons complex; and consistent U.S. leadership toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

This Permit Modification Request (PMR) should be a Class 3. The proposed New Filter Building should be considered in conjunction with the proposed new shaft. Together, these proposals add up to an increased waste disposal capacity. The New Filter Building would restore the mining and waste emplacement capacities to pre-2014 levels. The new shaft would increase these capacities.

40 CFR §270.42, Appendix I, Item F.1.a states that a modification or addition of container units resulting in greater than a 25% increase in the facility container storage capacity meets the definition of a Class 3 PMR. Although the New Filter Building itself would not increase waste capacity by 25%, the New Filter Building is the first step to increase the capacity at WIPP.

The New Mexico Environment Department should require the Carlsbad Field Office to think of this proposed action expansively and aim to combine rather than separate proposed modifications. The New Filter Building is actually a small part of a larger plan to expand WIPP. NMED should require DOE to do a big PMR for the expansion of WIPP.

Here's a list coming regulatory items that be considered as connected actions to expand WIPP:

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- New shaft
- New filter building
- Revised training
- Revised filled panel waste volume of record
- Updates and efficiencies
- Excluded waste prohibition
- Addition of concrete overpack aboveground storage
- Panel closure redesign
- Additional waste disposal panels

Clearly, all of these point to the need for an 'Expand WIPP' Permit Modification Request.

Would another release like the one in February 2014 cause the New Filter Building to become inoperable?

A description of exactly what happens during a radiological release in the underground must be provided.

Prevention of releases to the atmosphere (Part 4 Attachment A2, Attachment N) must be updated.

More information on the Salt Reduction Building is required. Is the removed salt contaminated? Is the removed salt tested for contamination? What would be done with any contaminated salt?

Thank you for your careful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Scott Kovac
Nuclear Watch New Mexico