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**STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

## ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION GROUP

P.O. BOX 968

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87504

(505) 827-0556

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Tom Bahr, Chairman  
Radioactive Waste Task Force

FROM: Robert H. Neill, Director  
Environmental Evaluation Group

DATE: November 6, 1987

The following is provided for your consideration for the Hearings on WIPP Land Withdrawal on the nature and amounts of the TRU Wastes needed to conduct experiments at WIPP during the five year period to demonstrate the safe disposal prior to the decision to dispose of wastes.

DOE has not informed us of the quantities of TRU waste required for either scientific experiments or operational experience during that period. The only scientific experiments identified to date are those associated with measuring the amounts of hydrogen and other gases generated by waste in the repository environment. At the Senate Hearings on the Bill in Carlsbad on October 12, 1987, Dr. Wendell Weart of Sandia National laboratory reported that four rooms filled with waste would be required for these experiments. This amounts to 3% of total waste.

- o 15% of 6,200,000 cu ft = 930,000 cu ft
- o 930,000 cu ft / 7.3 cu ft/drum = 125,000 drums
- o At 6,000 drums per room, four rooms would account for 24,000 drums or 3% of the total volume of waste to be emplaced.

Since it will be necessary to leave some drifts and rooms vacant in order to have access to the experiments as well as space for possible processing or restacking of the drums at the end of the demonstration period to permit proper backfill to be installed, the emplacement of 930,000 Cu ft of waste, (125,000 drums) would require the use of part of the third panel out of a total of eight panels.

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In summary, we have not received any scientific or operational justification for the emplacement of 15% of the total waste (an average rate of 2,000 drums/month for 60 months) during the period for the demonstration of safe disposal.

RHN:ca

cc: Larry Gordon, Member, Radioactive Waste Task Force  
Mike Burkhart, Member, Radioactive Waste Task Force  
Vickie Fisher, Member, Radioactive Waste Task Force  
Dewey Lonsberry, Member, Radioactive Waste Task Force