



Edgemont, South Dakota, Disposal Site

An UMTRCA Title II site

This fact sheet provides information about the **Edgemont site**. This site is managed by the **U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management under Title II** of the **Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978**.

Site Information and History

The former Edgemont uranium mill is located in Edgemont, South Dakota, in Fall River County near the southwest corner of South Dakota. The mill was constructed in 1956 and was operated by Mines Development, Inc., a subsidiary of Susquehanna-Western, Inc., until 1972. Production capacity of the mill was 500 tons of ore per day. Most of the ore came from mines in the Black Hills area of southwestern South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) purchased the mill in 1974, including mineral rights to about 99,000 acres of exploration properties in the Edgemont area. However, after evaluating engineering, economic, and environmental studies, TVA decided against operating the facility. As a result, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) required TVA to decommission the mill. Decommissioning activities began in 1986 and were completed in 1989. Milling operations had produced radioactive tailings, a predominantly sandy material. Cleanup of the site involved excavating approximately 4 million tons of tailings, contaminated soil, building materials, and equipment from 137 vicinity properties and moving them to a newly constructed disposal cell 2 miles south of the mill site.

Regulatory Setting

Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) in 1978 (Public Law 95-604). The Edgemont site is under the jurisdiction of Title II of UMTRCA, which applies to uranium mill sites that were under active NRC license when UMTRCA was passed. Title II of the legislation specifies that

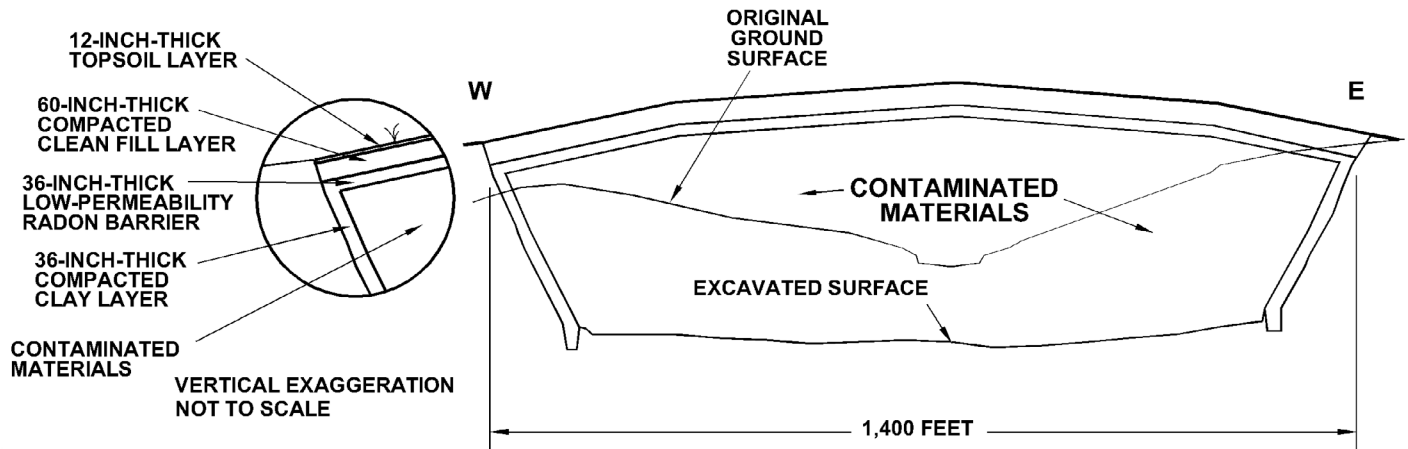
after reclamation is completed, long-term custody of the site is the responsibility of either the federal government or the host state, at the option of the state. South Dakota declined to become the long-term custodian of the Edgemont site, and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) assumed custodial responsibility. Under Title II of UMTRCA, the licensee, TVA, was responsible for remedial action. NRC's cleanup and reclamation standards are promulgated in Title 10 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), Part 40, Appendix A. These standards conform to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards in 40 CFR 192. The site was included under NRC's general license for long-term custody in 1996. At that time, title to the site transferred from TVA to DOE.

Disposal Site

The site consists of a 100-acre disposal cell located on a 360-acre parcel in a basin at the head of an ephemeral tributary to the Cheyenne River. The site overlies a 300- to 700-foot-thick layer of shale of sufficiently low permeability that NRC granted an exemption from the requirement of a liner beneath the disposal cell. The uppermost aquifer in the area is beneath the shale layer. Because contaminants from the disposal cell are not expected to ever come into contact with the aquifer, there is no groundwater monitoring system at the disposal site, and groundwater monitoring is not a part of the long-term surveillance requirements for the site. The primary land use in the area is livestock grazing.

Disposal Cell Design

The disposal cell encompasses about 100 acres and contains about 4 million tons (3 million cubic yards) of contaminated material with a total activity of 527 curies of radium-226. Placing the disposal cell at the head of an ephemeral drainage required construction of a containment dam of compacted



West-East Cross Section of the Edgemont Disposal Cell.

clay at the downgradient face of the disposal basin. The base of the cell is below ground surface; compacted clay perimeter walls averaging 13 feet in thickness are keyed into shale at the base of the cell and extend up the sides of the cell. The clay walls were designed to physically separate the contaminated tailings material from surrounding soils and any perched water zones that may be present.

The cover of the disposal cell is a multicomponent system designed to encapsulate and protect the contaminated materials. The 9-foot-thick disposal cell cover is composed of (1) a low-permeability radon barrier (first layer placed over compacted tailings) consisting of compacted clay, (2) clean, compacted fill, and (3) a layer of topsoil material. The top of the cell and surrounding disturbed areas were seeded with native grasses. An existing gully northwest of the cell and the containment dam face were armored with rock (riprap) for erosion protection. Additional riprap- and grass-protected diversion ditches were installed to channel runoff water away from the disposal cell.

Legacy Management Activities

The DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM) manages the Edgemont disposal site according to a site-specific Long-Term Surveillance Plan to ensure that the disposal cell systems continue to prevent release of contaminants to the environment. Under provisions of this plan, LM conducts annual inspections of the site to evaluate the condition of surface features and performs site maintenance as necessary.

In accordance with 40 CFR 192.32, the disposal cell is designed to be effective for 1,000 years, to the extent reasonably achievable, and, in any case, for at least 200 years. However, the general license has no expiration date, and LM's responsibility for the safety and integrity of the Edgemont disposal cell will last indefinitely.

All remediated vicinity properties were certified to meet cleanup standards of 40 CFR 192 and were released for unrestricted use. The state of South Dakota manages the vicinity property records and will respond to stakeholder

questions. Although DOE also retains copies of these records, LM has no further regulatory authority to provide long-term surveillance and maintenance oversight for the vicinity properties.

DOE initiated reuse at the Edgemont site in 2006 and maintains a grazing license for the entire site.



CONTACT INFORMATION

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY AT THE SITE,
CONTACT 911**

**LM TOLL-FREE EMERGENCY HOTLINE:
(877) 695-5322**

Site-specific documents related to the **Edgemont, South Dakota, Disposal Site** are available on the LM website at www.energy.gov/lm/edgemont-south-dakota-disposal-site

For more information about LM activities at the Edgemont site, contact:

**U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Legacy Management
2597 Legacy Way
Grand Junction, CO 81503**

Email:

public.affairs@lm.doe.gov

DOE Office of Legacy Management
(970) 248-6070



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