1982 WL 148326 (F.R.)

NOTICES

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact, Selection of Borosilicate Glass as the Defense Waste Processing Facility Waste Form for High-Level Radioactive Wastes Savanah River Plant, Aiken, South Carolina

Thursday, July 29, 1982

***32778** AGENCY: Energy Department.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared an environmental assessment (DOE/EA-0179) on the proposed selection of borosilicate glass as the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) waste form for the immobilization of the high-level radioactive wastes generated and stored at the DOE Savannah River Plant (SRP), Aiken, South Carolina. DOE recently decided to immobilize the SRP high-level radioactive wastes in the DWPF in preparation for transport to and disposal in a Federal repository (Federal Register, p. 23801, June 1, 1982). Selection of the DWPF waste form is the next step in the implementation of the disposal strategy. Based on the analyses in the assessment and in the environmental impact statement (DOE/EIS-0082) for the DWPF at SRP, a proposed finding of no significant impact has been prepared. The EA and proposed finding are being made available for public review before the Department makes its final determination on whether to prepare an EIS. The public review period will close ***32779** August 30, 1982. Following completion of the public review period, DOE will make its final determination whether to prepare an EIS.

Finding: The proposed action is to select borosilicate glass as the DWPF waste form for immobilizing SRP high-level radioactive wastes. High-level radioactive wastes have been generated at the SRP since 1954 as a byproduct of U.S. defense material production activities. These wastes result from the chemical processing of reactor fuel and target elements and typically consist of reactor fission products, unrecovered uranium and plutonium, activation products, aluminum compounds, and most of the processing chemicals. About 110,000 cubic meters (28 million gallons) of high-level radioactive wastes are temporarily stored in large underground tanks at the SRP.

The environmental impacts of immobilizing the SRP high-level wastes in the borosilicate glass waste form, temporarily storing the immobilized wastes on site until a geologic repository becomes available, and transporting the immobilized wastes to a geologic repository are assessed in the DWPF EIS. Borosilicate glass was selected as the reference waste form for the DWPF EIS analyses based on an evaluation program which began in 1973. SYNROC-D, a crystalline ceramic waste form, was presented in the waste form EA as an alternative to borosilicate glass.

The proposed finding of no significant impact for the selection of the DWPF waste form is based on the following findings, which are supported by the analyses in the waste form EA and DWPF EIS:

1. Given the decision to immobilize the SRP wastes at the DWPF and to dispose of them in a Federal geologic repository, the selection of the specific waste form, i.e., borosilicate glass, will not result in significant environmental impacts.

2. Differences in environmental effects and risks between borosilicate glass and available alternative waste forms such as crystalline ceramic SYNROC- D are not significant.

3. Borosilicate glass is capable of meeting draft and proposed Environmental Protection Agency and Nuclear Regulatory Commission repository performance specifications either as a waste form or as a

part of the repository waste form package.

4. The environmental effects and risks of immobilizing the SRP wastes with borosilicate glass, transporting these immobilized wastes to a geologic repository, and disposing of the immobilized wastes in a geologic repository are addressed in the DWPF EIS. Completion of the waste form EA has identified no new information which would affect the DWPF EIS analyses.

SINGLE COPIES OF THE WASTE FORM EA ARE AVAILABLE FROM: T. B. Hindman, Jr., Acting Director, DWPF Project Office, Savannah River Operations Office, U.S. Department of Energy, P.O. Box A, Aiken, South Carolina 29801.

COMMENTS: Comments on the EA and proposed finding of no significant impact may be sent to T. B. Hindman, Jr. at the address above. Comments received within 30 days of the publication date of this notice will be considered.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Raymond Pelletier, Office of Environmental Compliance, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Protection, Safety, and Emergency Preparedness, U.S. Department of Energy, Room 4G-047, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20585, (202) 252-4610.

Dated issued: July 12, 1982.

William A. Vaughn,

Assistant Secretary, Environmental Protection, Safety, and Emergency Preparedness.

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