

**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD (NNMCAB)
Waste Management Committee**

**Recommendation to the Department of Energy
No. 2008-01**

Recommendation to DOE and LANL to Expedite Planned Change Request for Shielded Containers

Background

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to package and emplace a portion of the Remote Handled (RH) Transuranic (TRU) Waste inventory in shielded containers at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The use of the shielded containers will enable DOE to expedite the cleanup of various TRU waste sites by significantly increasing the rate at which portions of the RH TRU waste can be received and emplaced at the WIPP. The shielded containers will be transported to WIPP in the HalfPACT transportation container. The shielded containers will be managed and emplaced in the rooms of the repository in a fashion similar to what is currently used for Contact Handled (CH) TRU waste.

Currently RH TRU containers must be handled with remote equipment, transported only 3 per truckload in a heavy shielded container, and disposed at WIPP in separate boreholes in the sidewalls of the salt cavern at WIPP. Transforming the RH TRU containers to CH TRU shielded containers will greatly improve the efficiency of handling, enable transport of multiple-drum shipments in each truckload and make possible disposal of what would otherwise be the RH TRU waste, using contact handling only, in the existing rooms at WIPP.

The Change Request stated that the disposal of RH TRU in shielded containers will have no significant impact upon repository performance.

Observation

Overall, it appears that the Change Request of using shielded containers for handling and disposing RH TRU waste at the WIPP is consistent with the currently approved safety envelop of WIPP operation (i.e., Long Term Performance release limit), and may even enhance worker safety during disposal operations by increased efficiency. Utilizing shielded containers allows the highly contaminated TRU waste packages to be handled on a contact basis, thus expediting the work process without compromising safety at both waste generator sites as well as the waste disposal site. The proposed change would enhance the capability at WIPP to receive the TRU waste from MDA G at LANL, thus facilitating the overall environmental restoration plans for this legacy waste area.

Recommendation

The NNMCAB recommends that:

*NNMCAB Recommendation 2008-01
Approved on July 30, 2008*

DOE provide strong support and encouragement to EPA to expedite the approval process for allowing the shielded containers for handling and disposing RH TRU wastes at WIPP, since it may expedite removal of TRU waste from LANL Area G with no significant impact on the performance of the repository.

If above issues have already been addressed in other documents or references, the NNMCAB recommends that for clarity and completeness, they be either summarized and added to the Change Request or specifically referenced where appropriate.

Intent

The intent of this recommendation is to encourage DOE to provide strong support for using shielded containers for removal of RH TRU waste, so that the TRU wastes from the LANL Area G can be removed on schedule.

Effect

The effect of using shielded containers to transform RH TRU containers into CH TRU containers will greatly increase the efficiency for removal, transport and disposition of the TRU.

References

1. Change Request, <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/docs/wipp/changerequest.pdf>