

October 31, 2002

Mr. Steve Zappe  
New Mexico Environment Department  
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**Regarding: Remote Handled Transuranic Waste**

Dear Mr. Zappe,

I believe that the Remote Handled Transuranic Waste (RH TRU) permit modification request (PMR) should be denied.

As you know, the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act (20 NMAC 4.1.900, incorporating 40 CFR 270.42(c)(6)), provides that NMED may deny a Class 3 modification.

I am strongly opposed to this modification as it is a threat to human health and the environment, and it is technically incomplete.

The following reasons will support my request to deny.

The permittees have offered supporting documentation for this permit modification request. The references throughout the modification were in many cases impossible to find. This alone makes this modification incomplete and therefore should be denied.

The permittees have stated that because 95% of the RH TRU waste must be repackaged or packaged that they will be more than comprehensive on their characterization and waste acceptance. What I have seen in the modification does not support this. I am concerned that there will be opportunities for banned substances to come to WIPP because of the permittees lack of characterization and less than thorough waste acceptance criterion. While the permittees claim that they are keeping their worker's safety in mind because of the extremely dangerous qualities of RH TRU, and this is why their characterization plans are so limited, I believe that it will potentially harm workers and the environment because of these limited characterization plans.

In addition to this, the permittees have no substantial accident protocols in place for RH TRU. While the permittees state that if a shipment of RH waste comes to WIPP that requires overpacking to safely dispose of that waste, they make no mention of what that overpack container will be. This is an extremely dangerous oversight.

Finally, I feel that the permittees' investigation into the concerns of volatile organic compounds, corrosives, and the like, has not been thorough enough. I believe that further

study into these issues should be done and that because of the inadequate studies this modification should be denied.

In conclusion, I believe that the permittees' plans to accept RH TRU waste at WIPP are premature. If this modification is any example of the permittees' understanding of what will be required to safely dispose of RH TRU waste (and it should be!), it is clear that the permittees are not ready to deal with this responsibility. Again, I find this modification incomplete, and an endangerment to human health and the environment. Please deny this modification!

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Name/Address/Phone Number