

Recommendation 356
Ship Low Activity Glass Canisters to WIPP

Background

When Defense Waste Processing Facility first began operations, a significant amount of relatively low activity waste was contained in these canisters. The waste in the canisters is defined as “high level waste” because of its origin and not its physical characteristics or health and environmental impacts related to this waste. The CAB has recently recommended that DOE look into redefining radioactive waste categories by the actual content of the waste (risk based), versus the origin of the waste. The CAB realizes that there is a law defining this and that can’t be changed quickly. But as part of the actions related to that recommendation, other actions that will help to de-inventory the SRS of radioactive waste can be done concurrently.

Along these lines, the Energy Communities Alliance published a recommendation to DOE in September 2017 titled, “Waste Disposition: A New Approach to DOE’s Waste Management Must Be Pursued.” It recommends basing waste classification treatment and disposal decisions on the actual characteristics of waste and risk to human health and safety rather than on the origin of the waste.

Recommendation

The SRS CAB recommends that DOE-SR:

1. Determine how many of the currently stored glass canisters could be reclassified as TRU waste based on the actual curie and actinide content (risk based).
2. Determine how many future glass canisters might be so classified.
3. Work with WIPP to determine required actions to be completed to their facility and regulatory considerations to be able to receive and dispose of those glass canisters.
4. Provide a conceptual plan for implementing this at SRS including new facilities and transportation infrastructure that would be required.
5. Provide a tentative schedule as to when this could be implemented assuming technical considerations only (versus political).