



Recommendation No. 142

July 24, 2001

Status of Low Level Radioactive and Mixed Waste Shipments

Background

The July 1995 Savannah River Site (SRS) Final Waste Management (WM) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluated the approaches to and environmental impacts of managing five types of wastes at SRS (Ref. 1). These waste types were liquid high-level radioactive, low-level radioactive, hazardous, mixed (radioactive and hazardous combined), and transuranic wastes. The preferred action was waste management activities under the moderate treatment alternative. Because waste management alternatives were implemented over several years, DOE expected more than one Record of Decision (ROD) would be issued.

Two RODs have been issued one in September 1995 and the other in May 1997. The selections in the RODs were made pending decisions under the WM Programmatic EIS (Ref. 2). The RODs included the onsite disposal of all SRS Low Level Radioactive Waste (LLW) and Mixed Waste (MW) and the return of residuals from waste treated offsite to SRS for storage or disposal. In February 2000, DOE issued a ROD for the WM Programmatic EIS selecting regional DOE treatment and disposal sites for LLW and MW (Ref. 3). Subsequent to that ROD, SRS completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the impacts associated with the transportation of certain LLW and MW forms to offsite commercial and DOE regional treatment and disposal facilities and documented a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (Ref. 4).

Comments

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) has previously agreed with the transportation EA and supported the decision to transport these waste shipments to offsite commercial and government facilities (Ref. 5). Furthermore, the SRS CAB understands and supports the need to ship LLW and mixed LLW for treatment/disposal. (Ref. 6)

Before SRS could send LLW and mixed LLW offsite, a third ROD was needed on the SRS Final Waste Management (WM) EIS to align the waste activity decisions with the WM Programmatic EIS. This ROD was signed by the Assistant Secretary for Environment Management (EM-1) and appeared in the Federal Register on June 28, 2001.

SRS plans to ship 13 large containers of LLW to Nevada Test Site (NTS) and 1,800 drums of mixed waste to a commercial site in Utah by September 30, 2001 (Ref. 7). The SRS CAB expects SRS to meet this objective and wants the practice to continue, as long as it is the most practicable, cost-effective, and equitable method of disposal for these types of waste. This issue is important to the SRS CAB. In the letter the SRS CAB wrote to Secretary Abraham, the off-site shipment of low-level waste, which cannot be disposed of at SRS, was specifically targeted as requiring adequate funding (Ref. 8).

Recommendation

The SRS CAB recommends the following:

1. SRS ship the 13 large containers of LLW to Nevada Test Site (NTS) and 1,800 drums of mixed waste to a commercial site in Utah by September 30, 2001 or earlier if possible.
2. SRS identify the type and quantity of waste that needs to be shipped off-site in FY02 and present the anticipated time schedule to the SRS CAB by October 23, 2001.

References

1. Savannah River Site Final Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement, (DOE/EIS-

- 0217), July 1995.
2. Final Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, (DOE/EIS-0200-F), May 1997.
 3. Record of Decision for the Department of Energy's Waste Management Program: Treatment and Disposal of Low-Level Waste and Mixed Low-Level Waste; Amendment of the Record of Decision for the Nevada Test Site, February 25, 2000.
 4. Environmental Assessment for the Offsite Transportation of Certain Low-Level and Mixed Radioactive Waste from Savannah River Site for Treatment and Disposal at Commercial and Government Facilities (DOE/EA-1308) Finding of No Significant Impact, February 2001.
 5. Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation No. 131 (adopted September 26, 2000), "Environmental Assessment for the Transportation of SRS MLLW and Certain LLW for Treatment and Disposal at Commercial and Government Facilities".
 6. Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation No. 103 (adopted November 16, 1999), "Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Orphan Waste".
 7. Status of Low Level Waste Shipments to the Nevada Test Site, presentation to the CAB WM Committee by Bernadetta Mayancsik, May 22, 2001.
 8. Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board Letter, Patterson/Galin to Secretary Abraham, April 24, 2001.

Agency Responses

[*Department of Energy-SR*](#)