



Recommendation No. 52

January 27, 1998

Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Certain Plutonium Residues and Scrub Alloy Stored at Rocky Flats

Background

Rocky Flats is a Department of Energy (DOE) site located near Denver, Colorado. Rocky Flats formerly operated to manufacture weapons components for the country's nuclear arsenal. The components were fabricated using plutonium-239 produced at and shipped from the Savannah River Site and other DOE sites. Much of the scrap plutonium remaining from the production process was then shipped back to SRS to be recycled.

With the end of the Cold War, however, weapons production ceased, and weapons fabrication at Rocky Flats ended. As a result of the nuclear arsenal reduction and growing budget constraints, DOE has committed to close and clean up the Rocky Flats site. The stabilization of the nuclear materials remaining at Rocky Flats is now being addressed in an environmental impact statement (EIS). One of the preferred alternatives is to send three types of nuclear materials to SRS for stabilization and interim storage.

Recommendation

The SRS CAB supports the preferred alternative in the Rocky Flats draft EIS for selecting SRS to stabilize the following materials in the F canyon:

- Scrub alloy
- Plutonium fluoride residues
- Sand, slag and crucible residues.

Supporting Statement

The CAB believes the materials proposed to be shipped from Rocky Flats and processed at SRS will be stabilized more safely, more expediently and more cost effectively than with any other alternative. These materials represent approximately 10% of all Rocky Flats plutonium residue being addressed in the EIS. SRS has the only large-scale processing capability in the country. In addition, DOE has safely transported these and other radioactive materials for over 40 years in secure containers meeting national Department of Transportation shipping container regulations. To select another technology would be costly, time consuming and require additional handling with possible safety issues.

The stabilized plutonium can then be easily accommodated in the planned Actinide Package and Storage Facility along with other SRS materials already designated for interim storage in this vault. This stabilized material will be suitable for DOE's ongoing program for plutonium disposition in a national repository.

Agency Responses

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