Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

JUN 1 0 2003

Mr. Wade Waters, Chair
Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board
308 Pinewood Drive
Pooler, GA 31411

Dear Mr. Waters:

SUBJECT: Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 163 – High Activity Transuranic (TRU) Waste Packaging (Your letter, 05/21/03)

Thank you for your recommendation on the Savannah River Site's (SRS) TRU Waste Program's high activity waste packaging needs. I would like to respond to the three recommendations as follows:

1. **DOE accelerate shipments of high activity waste from SRS by expediting the design, certification, and fabrication of the TRUPACT-III shipping containers. These containers must be designed to alleviate the hydrogen gas concerns. These shipping containers are needed as soon as possible and should be available to allow the first shipment of SRS high activity TRU waste to be compatible with the Performance Management Plan (PMP) shipping schedule of fiscal year (FY) 2005.**

DOE Carlsbad Field Office is scheduled to submit the TRUPACT-III container requirements to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for licensing in the fall of 2003. The TRUPACT-III license request, if approved, will allow the majority of our large TRU waste containers to be shipped in their current form without any repackaging for hydrogen issues or total curie content. A 2003 submittal date will allow enough time for NRC to approve the TRUPACT-III container and for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant to start using the waste transport container in FY05. DOE will update the CAB on the NRC submittal for the TRUPACT-III in early FY04.

2. **DOE expedite the design, certification, and fabrication of the ARROW-PAK shipping containers. These shipping containers are needed as soon as possible and should be available to allow the first shipment of SRS high activity TRU waste with the potential to generate hydrogen gas to be compatible with the PMP shipping schedule of FY05.**

DOE is scheduled to make a decision on the viability of the ARROW PAK container late FY03. Parallel to the ARROW-PAK decision, DOE is working with NRC to increase the drum wattage requirement in the TRUPACT-II container that will allow SRS to ship high wattage drums that generate hydrogen gas as an alternative to ARROW-PAK. If a decision is made not to pursue ARROW-PAK, then DOE will submit a modification to NRC on the TRUPACT-II for approval in late 2003. In either case, DOE will have a path forward for shipping the high activity TRU waste in drums to support SRS shipments of this waste in FY05.

#163

3. **DOE continue the investigation into hydrogen "getters" and have them available as soon as possible to ensure that the shipments of SRS high activity TRU waste with the potential to generate hydrogen gas is compatible with the PMP shipping schedule of FY05.**

DOE is committed to providing waste packaging alternatives for shipping SRS TRU waste to WIPP that will support the SRS Performance Management Plan and minimize the need for repackaging TRU waste to meet transportation requirements and/or WIPP waste acceptance criteria. The hydrogen "getters" technology continues to be researched by DOE, but has not produced results that are suitable to present to the NRC for review. DOE plans to evaluate all currently funded hydrogen "getters" research work at the end of FY03 and make a determination on it being a viable option for shipping high wattage (hydrogen generating) TRU waste.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Bert Crapse of my staff at (803) 725-9866.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey M. Allison
Manager

OB-03-026

cc: Ines Triay, CBFO