

D20. EPA ISSUES CRITERIA FOR STANDARD COMPLIANCE

The criteria for determining whether The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant(WIPP) complies with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) radiation protection standards for the disposal of radioactive waste have been issued.

In 1993, the EPA issued its first set of criteria in an advanced notice of proposed rule making, and a preliminary draft of the proposal was published. The proposed rule was published in 1995; the current final rule incorporates some substantial changes from the 1995 proposed rule.

The following are among the important changes implemented in the final rule:

- 1) Human intrusion. The EPA has clarified which activities fall within the scope of "human intrusion".
- 2) Waste characterization. Clarification of terms used in discussion of waste characterization has been implemented in the final rule. The term such as waste categories has been eliminated, in favor of the use of "waste components," to denote an amount of a type of waste, expressed as a volume, mass, or weight.
- 3) Peer review. The EPA will require peer review of just three specific areas concerning WIPP; conceptual models that the DOE selects and develops; waste characterization assessment; and the study of engineering barriers.
- 4) Release limits. The final rule specifies that release limits will be based on total activity. The proposed rule recommended setting release limits at 100 years.
- 5) Monitoring requirements. Post-closure monitoring is required to be complementary with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act(RCRA), rather than "compatible", as indicated in the proposed rule.
- 6) Waste removal. The final rule calls for the DOE to perform an evaluation to demonstrate that the removal of waste will remain feasible for a reasonable period of time after disposal.

For more, "EPA Issues Criteria for Standards Compliance," pg.49, Nuclear news, May 1996. For further information on the rule, contact Betsy Forinash, Mary Kruger, or Martin Offutt at 202/233-9310, or write to Radiation Protection Division, Mail Code 6602J, U.S. EPA, Washington, D.C. 20460.