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OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT
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PACKAGING, TRANSPORT AND BURIAL OF LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Description of Circumstances:

Low-level radioactive waste is that waste which can be transferred and shipped to one of three waste burial facilities which are located in and licensed by the Agreement States of Nevada, South Carolina, and Washington. On July 10, 1979, the Governors of the three states notified NRC Chairman Hendrie of the serious and repeated disregard for rules governing the shipments of low-level radioactive wastes to these burial facilities.

Examples of violations of Agreement State, DOT and NRC rules follow:

Improperly packaged uranium fines igniting packaged liquid scintillation vials in combustible waste is believed to have caused a fire and destruction of a truck at the Beatty, Nevada burial facility on May 14, 1979.

On July 2, 1979, three of twelve steel containers shipped to the Beatty burial facility were found to be leaking radioactive material. The material was described on the bill of lading as being a solid inorganic salt (evaporator concentrates solidified with urea formaldehyde) from a reactor facility. The Governor of the State of Nevada ordered the drums to be shipped out of the state and the burial facility was temporarily closed.

On July 30, the first shipment into the reopened Beatty facility contained free liquid in "solid" material. The radioactive contents were sand filters used at an insitu leaching process at a uranium mill.

Forty-three shipments with sixty-three deficiencies were observed during the package inspection program between April 10 and July 5, 1979, by the Agreement State of South Carolina, at the Barnwell, S.C. burial facility. The shipments were from reactor, medical, industrial and military facilities.

On June 28, 1979, the Federal Highway Administration issued a Notice of Violation to a reactor facility proposing a \$10,000 fine for truck contamination resulting from improper closures on 55-gallon drums of LSA material and for improper loading of the drums on the vehicle.

These are a few examples of shipments of radioactive material to burial facilities which did not fully meet NRC, DOT and Agreement State requirements which were developed to protect the health and safety of the public. The Governors of the three States with licensed burial facilities have indicated that if the situation is not rectified, they may have to initiate actions which would deny use of the three burial sites by violators.

Sources of Information:

The DOT regulatory requirements can be found in 49 CFR Parts 170-179. The NRC regulatory requirements can be found in 10 CFR Parts 19 to 71. The NRC regulatory requirements for Agreement State licensees in non-agreement states are in 10 CFR Part 150. Copies of the regulations may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Information about licensing requirements for NRC packages can be obtained from the NRC Transportation Branch (301-427-4122). Information about DOT packaging and transport requirements can be obtained by calling the DOT Office of Hazardous Materials (202-426-2311).

Action To Be Taken By Licensees:

To assure the safe transfer, packaging, and transport of low-level radioactive waste, each licensee is expected to:

1. Maintain a current set of DOT and NRC regulations concerning the transfer, packaging and transport of low-level radioactive waste material.
2. Maintain a current set of requirements (license) placed on the waste burial firm by the Agreement State of Nevada, South Carolina, or Washington before packaging low-level radioactive waste material for transfer and shipment to the Agreement State licensee. If a waste collection contractor is used, obtain the appropriate requirements from the contractor.
3. Designate, in writing, people in your organization who are responsible for the safe transfer, packaging and transport of low-level radioactive material.
4. Provide management-approved, detailed instructions and operating procedures to all personnel involved in the transfer, packaging and transport of low-level radioactive material. Special attention should be given to controls on the chemical and physical form of the low-level radioactive material and on the containment integrity of the packaging.

5. Provide training and periodic retraining in the DOT and NRC regulatory requirements, the waste burial license requirements, and in your instructions and operating procedures for all personnel involved in the transfer, packaging and transport of radioactive material. Maintain a record of training dates, attendees, and subject material for future inspections by NRC personnel.
6. Provide training and periodic retraining to those employees who operate the processes which generate waste to assure that the volume of low-level radioactive waste is minimized and that such waste is processed into acceptable chemical and physical form for transfer and shipment to a low-level radioactive waste burial facility.
7. Establish and implement a management-controlled audit function of all transfer, packaging and transport activities to provide assurance that personnel, instructions and procedures, and process and transport equipment are functioning to ensure safety and compliance with regulatory requirements.
8. Perform, within 60 days of the date of this bulletin, a management-controlled audit of your activities associated with the transfer, packaging and transport of low-level radioactive waste. Maintain a record of all audits for future inspections by NRC or DOT inspectors. (Note: If you have an established audit function and have performed such an audit of all activities in Items 1-6 within the past six months, this audit requirement is satisfied.)

No written reply to this Bulletin is required. NRC inspectors will examine your continuing response during future inspection of your activities. Licensees who do not generate low-level waste for burial do not need to take actions described above. If you desire additional information regarding this matter, contact the Director of the appropriate NRC Regional Office.