

SCP-OPEN ITEMS/DOE LTR

JUL 26 1991

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Mr. Dwight E. Shelor  
Associate Director for Systems  
and Compliance  
Office of Civilian Radioactive  
Waste Management  
U.S. Department of Energy RW-30  
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Shelor:

SUBJECT: CLARIFICATION REGARDING THE DISPOSITION OF OPEN ITEMS IN THE  
HIGH-LEVEL WASTE PROGRAM

In a letter dated July 3, 1991, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) summarized its understanding of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's approach regarding the tracking of open items in the high-level waste (HLW) program. As noted by DOE in its letter, this approach considers that all open items generated prior to the December 1988 publication date of DOE's Site Characterization Plan (SCP) to be subsumed or superseded by the objections, comments, and questions within the staff's July 1989 Site Characterization Analysis (SCA) of the SCP. Although DOE's July 3, 1991, letter has accurately stated the staff's position on this matter, we wish to point out that there is one programmatic area for which the SCA did not categorically subsume or supersede previously identified open items, and this area concerns DOE's Waste Acceptance Process (WAP) for the vitrification of HLW.

While the SCA included some concerns related to DOE's HLW glass-making programs, the principal focus of discussions in this programmatic area has been through technical meetings and through other interactions related to WAP. As recently as March 1, 1991, the NRC staff, DOE, and the State of Nevada conducted a telephone conference call to discuss points of mutual interest in the area of WAP. One of the areas of mutual interest discussed during the telecon was the need for a plan to reach closure on the open items that have been identified in the WAP and related correspondence. In this regard, the NRC and DOE staffs have previously exchanged lists of WAP-related open items (letter dated October 13, 1989, from J. Linehan (NRC) to R. Stein (DOE); letters dated October 24, 1988, and August 3, 1989, from R. Stein to J. Linehan), and these open items were not subsumed or superseded by the objections, comments, and questions within the SCA. As discussed in the March 1, 1991, telephone conference call, the NRC staff expressed an interest in reaching closure on the WAP, including the applicable open items, before the initiation of "hot" glass-making operations by DOE's HLW glass producers.

In order to assure that the staff's disposition of open items is properly tracked, the NRC staff is developing an "open item tracking system" that will contain open items related to both WAP and the SCA. In addition, it will contain more recently identified open items such as those related to study plans reviewed by the NRC staff.

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If you have any questions or desire additional information regarding these issues, please contact Michael P. Lee at 301/492-0421 or FTS 492-0421.

Sincerely,

*for Joseph J. Holonich*

John J. Linehan, Acting Director  
Repository Licensing and Quality  
Assurance Project Directorate  
Division of High-Level Waste  
Management  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

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