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MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph O. Bunting, Chief
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FROM: Neil J. Numark
Policy and Program Control Branch
Division of Waste Management

SUBJECT: REPORT ON WASTE MANAGEMENT '84 CONFERENCE AND VISIT TO
REPOSITORY SITES

From March 12th through 20th, I was on official travel to attend Waste Management '84 in Tucson, Arizona and to tour the WIPP site in New Mexico and the Hanford site in Washington. This report summarizes these three-activities.

The Waste Management '84 conference was attended by over 800 individuals, apparently the largest number ever. The plenary session featured a speech by Congressman Udall, who focused on how DOE actions are falling short of the commitment needed, as prescribed in the NWPA. Mike Lawrence defended DOE's record and described plans for a second repository, MRS, and spent fuel storage. Commissioner Asselstine discussed NRC's conditions for concurring with the DOE siting guidelines. Also speaking in the plenary session were Dan Egan of EPA, Holmes Brown of the National Governors' Association, and Linn Draper of Gulf States Utilities. Questions were then posed by a panel comprised of environmentalists, congressional staff, state representatives, and individuals from OTA and ANEC. Commissioner Gilinsky addressed the conference over lunch following the plenary session, focusing on the importance of MRS and the need for an independent government entity to run the waste program.

For the remainder of the conference, I attended the following sessions: Issues in Demonstrating Waste Disposal; Spent Fuel Options Under the NWPA; Status of Defense Waste Disposal; Repository Performance Assessment; Waste Package Corrosion; Waste Management Strategies; and two poster sessions.

On March 16th I arrived at the WIPP office in Carlsbad, NM, from which point we were taken in DOE vehicles to the WIPP site. The WIPP tour was organized by Waste Management '84 as an optional side trip. Following a thorough briefing, slide presentations, and mine safety discussion, we observed above-ground facilities, including salt piles and hoist operations, after which we descended 2150 feet in the 12 foot diameter shaft through which the salt has been excavated. Underground for approximately 90 minutes, we observed mining operations and visited the geomechanical testing area, and were briefed by the

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site project manager on operation plans and schedules for the site. I took several photographs at the site and plan to prepare a slide presentation.

Following arrival at Richland, WA, I met with Bob Cook, NRC's On-site Licensing Representative, on Monday morning March 19th in his temporary office in the Federal Building. We then toured the Hanford site with emphasis on the waste repository activities and the site geology. Basalt flows were observed near the northern edge of the reservation on the bank of the Columbia River. We also visited the drill rig, which after 167 feet of drilling has been dismantled for repairs, and several monitoring wells in the vicinity of the shaft. At the Near Surface Test Facility, the project manager gave a slide presentation and toured us through the Facility, inside of Gable Mountain, including the heater test room and extensometer room. Later, we observed some of the new defense waste tanks under construction, and briefly visited Rockwell's waste management laboratories and core library. Other defense waste management activities and the PUREX plant were observed only from the outside. We also viewed the production reactors, FFTF, WPPSS 1, 2 and 4, and the low-level waste burial ground from a distance.

The tours of the waste sites were extremely informative and provided an excellent perspective on repository operations for orientation purposes. The Tucson conference was of greatest benefit for the plenary session the first day. The remaining sessions, each a series of eight to ten twenty minute papers of varying quality, were focused on narrow issues, mostly technical, and were of less benefit for program management purposes than the plenary session.

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