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DEPARTMENT OF
RADIOLOGICAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

December 30, 1993

Secretary of the Commission
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555
ATTN: Docketing and Service Branch

Gentlemen:

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on a petition for rulemaking filed by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. We disagree with the request for 24 hour prior notification to the appropriate sewage treatment plant prior to release of radioactive materials to the sanitary sewer system. However, we agree materials should be specifically exempted from regulation when incinerated as a part of the treatment process.

Disposal via the sanitary sewer system has been an integral part of the disposal process by a large number of licensees for some time. The absolute quantities of licensed materials disposed in this manner are small and are typically a small fraction of the Maximum Permissible Concentration for licensees. However, the volumes of this readily dispersible or aqueous waste can be quite large (several hundred to several thousand gallons per year). Disposal by other techniques such as adsorbing the aqueous waste and land disposal would not be cost effective.

This request does not mention prohibition of sewer disposal, and we believe it should not address this issue. We feel that Federal regulations addressing this activity should take precedence over any local or regional ordinances. If the current Maximum Permissible Concentrations or Release to Sewer Concentrations do not adequately protect the health and safety of the public (including sewage plant employees) the concentrations should be adjusted. The concentrations should also reflect any tendency of certain metals or chemical forms to concentrate in piping or in the sludge.

A framework that would require 24 hour notification does not seem to serve any useful purpose in our opinion and would be a burden to most licensees. Failure to notify could lead to violations that have little or no bearing on health or safety since typical concentrations of radioactive material in sewage are not at levels that would have the potential for any harm to the sewage system or the workers. The contamination that

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occurred in the Northeast Sewer District was probably a result of years of activity and could not be linked to a single event, something this notification process does not address. Perhaps a single notification to the treatment plant of the intent to release radioactivity to the sewer system is the most appropriate way to approach this issue.

As a NRC licensee we continue to support health and safety based regulations that protect the public and radiation workers from unnecessary exposure to radiation. In this case we do not feel that the 24 hour notification provision of this petition would benefit the public or radiation workers.

Sincerely,



James F. Schweitzer, Ph.D., CHP
Radiation Safety Officer