

NRC DENIES PETITION FOR INTERIM STANDARDS  
ON LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE DISPOSAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has denied a petition from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) asking that the Commission immediately adopt interim regulations setting standards for shallow land disposal of transuranic and other low-level radioactive wastes. The Commission also denied an accompanying NRDC request that the NRC prepare a broad generic environmental impact statement on its low-level waste disposal program.

In denying the petition, the Commission said that there is no compelling potential health and safety hazard to warrant immediate adoption of interim regulations in this area. A program for the orderly development of comprehensive regulations governing the management and disposal of all types of low-level radioactive wastes by shallow land burial and other alternative methods is currently in progress, with regulations and supporting environmental impact statements scheduled to be issued within the next few years. As a practical matter, the Commission believes that well-planned, interim rules could not be prepared on a schedule much different from the current, ongoing schedule for development of final regulations. Further, to attempt to prepare interim rules now would delay placing into effect the broader, more comprehensive regulations currently under development.

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With regard to the development of a generic environmental impact statement, the Commission believes that this type of separate generic statement on low-level waste disposal is neither required by the National Environmental Policy Act nor necessary for the development of the NRC waste disposal program. The environmental impact statements that will be developed to support the forthcoming regulations are expected to be of sufficient scope to make a separate generic environmental impact statement unnecessary.

The specific actions sought by the NRDC petition, and NRC's reasons for denial, are set forth in detail in a notice published in the Federal Register on \_\_\_\_\_.

A notice of filing of the petition for rulemaking was published in the Federal Register for public comment on September 23, 1976, following receipt on August 6, 1976, of the petition and the letter asking for a generic environmental impact statement. The Commission's consideration of the NRDC requests included a consideration of the comments received.

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