



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

Comm
CORR

July 27, 1979

The Honorable Richard W. Riley
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Governor Riley:

Thank you for your April 19, 1979 letter on low-level waste (LLW) disposal capacity.

The Commission appreciates your concerns regarding assurance of adequate regionally distributed disposal capacity for LLW; in fact, it does appear that the Barnwell site is receiving a major fraction of the commercially generated LLW. In this regard, the Commission notes that you support the current license volume limitation for disposal of LLW at the Chem-Nuclear facility at Barnwell -- but would urge that you consider LLW disposal needs in the larger context before imposing additional volume restrictions. For instance, some facilities, such as hospitals and laboratories, possess severely restricted onsite storage capacity.

The matter of safe disposal of LLW is one of considerable importance to the NRC. On July 7 of last year, we wrote Secretary Schlesinger asking the Department of Energy (DOE) to prepare a contingency plan for DOE acceptance of commercial LLW should the need arise. A copy of our letter is enclosed. In that letter, the Commission raised the question of whether adequate regionally distributed disposal capacity for the nation's LLW will be available at the currently operating facilities. By way of follow-up action, members of the NRC staff have met several times with DOE staff over the past 10 months and DOE is preparing such a contingency plan for acceptance of commercial LLW. Action by DOE in preparing a plan, when coupled with implementation, should meet any immediate short range needs for LLW disposal capacity which the commercial sector is unable to provide.

To address the longer range concerns regarding adequate capacity, we participated in and continue to support the recommendation of the Interagency Review Group on Nuclear Waste Management that DOE take the lead in preparation of a national waste management program plan. We understand DOE will be directed to work closely with other Federal agencies, states, industry, and the public in the development of such a plan which may include the siting of waste management facilities on a regional basis. The plan will require an evaluation of the number, type, and general location of disposal sites needed for the LLW which will be generated over the next few decades. It is anticipated that the states will be asked to help identify regional disposal sites.

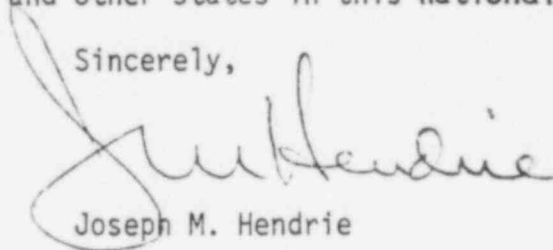
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With respect to NRC's LLW regulatory program, we are moving ahead to assure that formal regulations, supporting regulatory guides, and licensing procedures are available in a timely manner to meet siting needs and to address disposal actions such as disposal of waste generated by the incident at Three Mile Island. We plan to propose formal regulations and technical criteria for shallow land disposal next year. A part of our program also includes the examination of alternative disposal methods for LLW. We plan to propose regulations for one alternative disposal method (e.g., intermediate depth burial or mined cavity disposal) by 1982.

We agree that management of LLW is a national problem requiring a national solution. We believe that resolution of the problem is underway and we plan to work closely with South Carolina and other states in this national effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. M. Hendrie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joseph M. Hendrie

Enclosure:
Ltr to J.R. Schlesinger from
J.M. Hendrie dtd 7/7/78