

JAN 17 1990

M-32

MEMORANDUM FOR: Richard L. Bangart, Director
Division of Low Level Waste Management
and Decommissioning

FROM: Glen L. Sjoblom, Deputy Director
Division of Industrial and
Medical Nuclear Safety

SUBJECT: WEST VALLEY BURIAL GROUND

On January 11, 1990, we received the enclosed Department of Energy (DOE) memorandum concerning the West Valley Demonstration Project. The memorandum addresses the status of the (so-called) NRC-licensed disposal area at West Valley, which is where leached hulls and other reprocessing wastes were buried during the years when the reprocessing plant operated. There are several fairly well-known problems with this disposal area that have long concerned the NRC staff and others involved in West Valley. The main problems are erosion in the gullies near the disposal area and accumulation of water in the individual burial holes. A symptom of the latter problem has been intermittent leaking of reprocessing solvent from buried tanks into some of the nearby monitoring wells. A recent recurrence of this leakage has prompted the DOE West Valley Project Office to propose near-term remedial action. DOE has already decided to build an interception trench between the disposal area and the nearest gully. They also plan to press New York State to begin longer-term remedial action, such as disinterring the remaining solvent tanks. Attachment 2 of the enclosure lists the options DOE is considering for getting the remedial work started. One of the options would involve licensing action by NRC.

Even if NRC action turns out not to be required, the course chosen by DOE will probably affect the condition of the West Valley site in important ways. I suggest that we meet as soon as possible to discuss the technical, legal, and licensing implications of these developments.

Your staff will already have received the DOE memorandum through the normal West Valley distribution channels.

Original Signed by

Glen L. Sjoblom, Deputy Director
Division of Industrial and
Medical Nuclear Safety

Enclosure: DOE memorandum of January 2, 1990
from W. W. Bixby to J. E. Solecki

cc: J. Wolf, OGC
T. Nicholson, RES

Distribution: w/o enclosure

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