



NOV 26 1982

Ms. Joyce H. Stavitz  
 USC Campus Life  
 STU 202 MCO-0890  
 University Park  
 Los Angeles, CA 90089-0890

Dear Ms. Stavitz:

This is in response to your letter of November 2, 1982, requesting information on nuclear waste sites and short and long-term effects on the environment.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is responsible for regulating the disposal of radioactive wastes from licensed activities and high-level radioactive wastes generated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in order to assure adequate protection of public health and safety and the environment. DOE is responsible for research and development of different disposal methods of high-level and low-level wastes. For more information concerning DOE's plans and programs, we suggest you write to Dr. Franklin E. Coffman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Waste Management and Fuel Cycle Programs, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C. 20545.

The following information is provided regarding waste disposal sites. There are some 20 repositories for low-level wastes in the United States. Of these, 14 are operated by the Department of Energy for federally-funded programs; and six are commercial, although three are no longer in operation (see the attached map). Below is additional information on the six commercial sites.

Under a provision of the Atomic Energy Act enabling qualified states to assume certain regulatory responsibilities from the NRC, all commercial low-level waste disposal sites but one in Sheffield, Illinois, are licensed by "Agreement States," and the Sheffield site is no longer accepting waste. Of the five state-regulated sites--West Valley, New York; Maxey Flats, Kentucky; Beatty, Nevada; Barnwell, South Carolina; and the Hanford facility near Richland, Washington--only the Hanford, Barnwell, and Beatty sites are still in operation. Pursuant to existing law, NRC continues to regulate the receipt and disposal of special nuclear material (SNM) at the Barnwell and Hanford sites.

DIST:

TICKET NO:

---

OFC :	:	:	:	:	:	:
NAME :	:	:	:	:	:	:
DATE : 82/11/24	:	:	:	:	:	:

---

The disposal of commercial low-level radioactive waste is now a state rather than a Federal responsibility, as established by the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980. States are currently working to develop regional compacts to assure adequate disposal capacity without building sites in every state.

To date, NRC has not licensed any high-level waste disposal sites. The Department of Energy (DOE) has the responsibility for selecting and developing a disposal technology, and constructing, operating, and decommissioning a disposal facility under NRC license, although wastes used for or part of research and development activities would generally not fall under NRC regulation.

Attached are some excerpts from a December 1981 report prepared by the Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory. This report explains some of the disposal methods for radioactive waste under consideration. The report, entitled "Understanding Radioactive Waste," (PNL-3570) can be purchased from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22151, for \$6.50.

I hope this information will assist you with your term paper.

Sincerely,

*NS*

Nancy L. Still  
Information Assistant  
Division of Waste Management

Enclosures:

- 1. Map of LLW Sites
- 2. Excerpts fm PNL-3570,  
"Understanding Radioactive Waste"

DISTRIBUTION: WM-82-731  
 WM s/f 411.1  
 NMSS r/f PDR  
 NStill  
 DRMattson  
 JSurmeier  
 MKearney  
 JOBunting

DIST:

TICKET NO:

---

OFC :	WMPI <i>NS</i> :	WMPI <i>NS</i> :	:	:	:	:
NAME :	NStill:nls :	DRMattson :	:	:	:	:
DATE :	82/11/24 :	11/24 /82 :	:	:	:	:

---