



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Services and Research Administration
Western Region
301 Howard Street - Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94105-2241

(13)

134RAD

In Reply Refer To:

NOV 7 1995

David L. Meyer
Chief, Regulatory Publications Branch
Division of Freedom of Information and Publication Service
Office of Administration
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

RECEIVED
NOV 13 1995
USING

Subj: Joint NRC/EPA draft guidance on the storage of mixed radioactive and hazardous waste

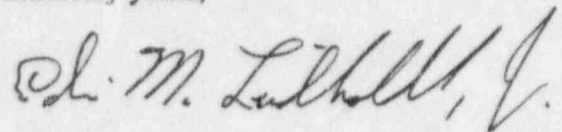
Dear sir:

I wish to make two recommendations regarding the draft guidance on the storage of mixed radioactive and hazardous waste published in the Federal Register on August 7, 1995. My first recommendation is in regard to the section entitled "Decay in Storage of Mixed Waste" on Page 40208. This section mentions that the NRC generally allows medical facilities to store waste containing half-lives less than 65 days for decay, with disposal as non-radioactive waste after a specified time has elapsed and certain measurements are made. Allowing decay-in-storage for half-lives less than 65 days was formerly a good choice, because it includes the radionuclides P-32 (half-life - 14 days) and I-125 (half-life - 60 days) commonly used in biomedical research. However, with the advent of modern molecular biology, S-35 (half-life of 88 days) has become one of the most commonly used and important radionuclides. I strongly recommend that the NRC "generally allow" the decay-in-storage of radionuclides with half lives up to 90 days. This would decrease the cost of biomedical research, decrease collective population dose by encouraging decay-in-storage, and increase the fraction of mixed waste that can be ultimately disposed of as non-radioactive hazardous waste.

My second recommendation is with regard to the dual requirements for a RCRA permit and NRC license for waste being stored for decay. The requirements for both an NRC license and a RCRA permit are burdensome and not consistent with the goals of "reinventing government." I recommend that the NRC become the only federal agency directly regulating mixed waste being stored for decay. Permission to store mixed waste for decay would be granted in the NRC license; a separate RCRA permit would not be required. The NRC would enforce the EPA's hazardous waste storage requirements until the specified storage time had elapsed and specified measurements had shown the emitted radiation to be indistinguishable from background. This would be less burdensome on licensees and would likely result in improved compliance, because NRC and agreement state inspectors audit facilities more frequently than do EPA inspectors.

I appreciate your attention to this matter. If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (415) 744-6243.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edwin M. Leidholdt, Jr.".

Edwin M. Leidholdt, Jr., Ph.D.
Regional Radiation Safety Program Manager