

Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal

KHNP Training Program Module 12 Interim Storage of Spend Fuel

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Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin Company,
for the United States Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration
under contract DE-AC04-94AL85000.



Agenda

- **Background:**
 - Why proceed with disposal?
 - What is safe disposal?
 - Fundamentals of U.S. Radioactive Waste Disposal
- **LILW Characteristics and Disposal Options**
- **Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal**
 - U.S. GCD Experience
 - International Experience
 - U.S. GTCC Option
- **Advantages of Borehole Disposal**



What is Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal?

Disposal of radioactive wastes in augered shafts or boreholes at depths of 30 to 300 m.





Background: Why Proceed With Disposal?

- The people that created and benefited from radioactive materials should safely dispose of the radioactive materials
- The burden of radioactive waste disposal should not be passed to generations that did not create or benefit from the radioactive materials
- Critical part of countries infrastructure for peaceful uses of radioactive materials



Background: Why Proceed With Disposal?

- Long-term storage of unwanted radioactive materials is not considered sustainable, and in many cases long-term storage may represent a high-risk situation (IAEA Tech Report 436, 2005)
 - Many remain hazardous 100's to 1,000's of years and individual and government control can not be guaranteed
 - Safety and Security hazard



Background: Current Hazard Sealed Radioactive Sources

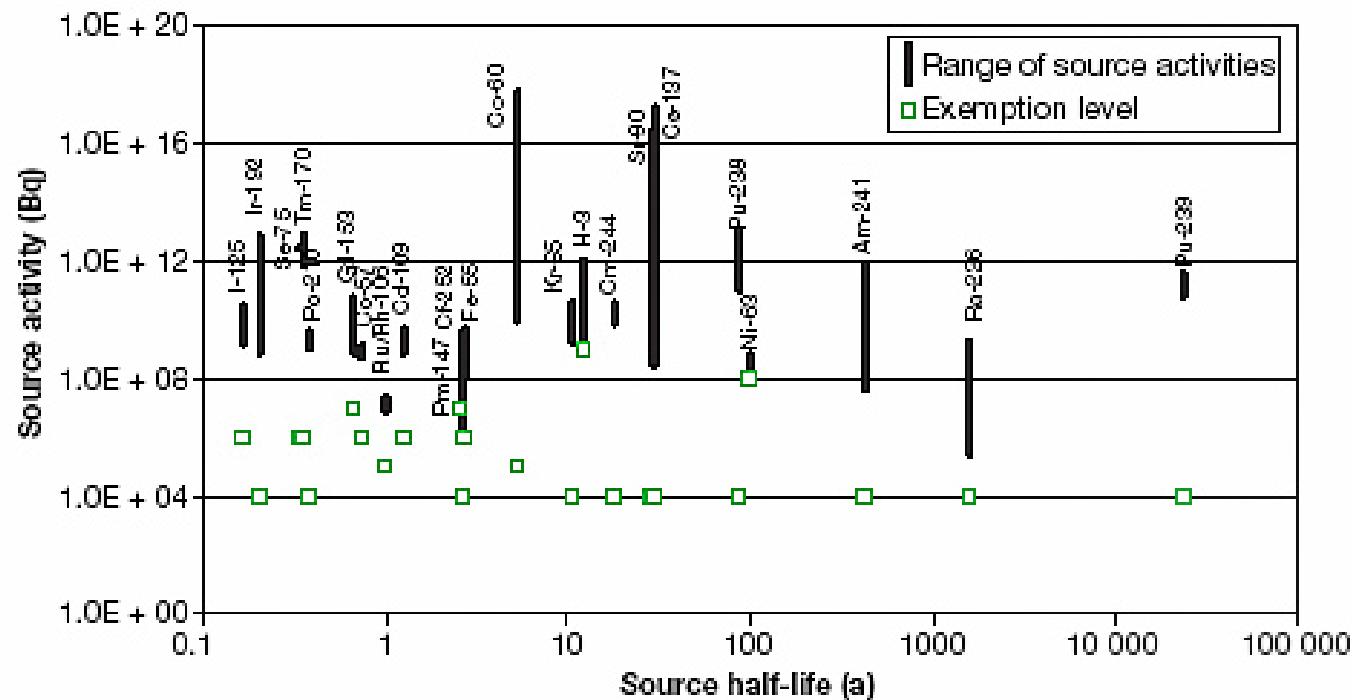


FIG. 1. Ranges of source activities for various radionuclides.

IAEA Technical Report no. 436, 2005



Background: Future Hazard Sealed Radioactive Sources

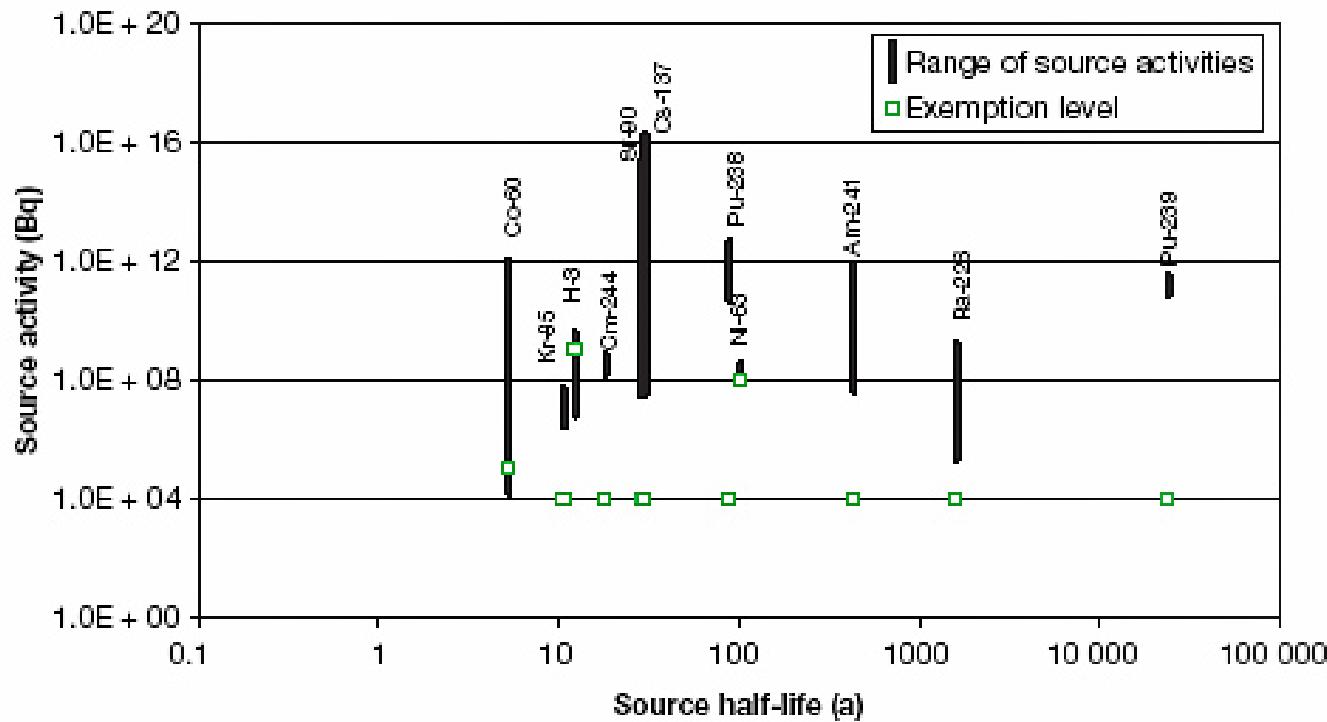


FIG. 2. The effect of 100 years of decay on the ranges of source activities.

IAEA Technical Report no. 436, 2005



What is Safe Disposal?

- Permanent isolation of radioactive wastes from humans and the environment
 - Keep people from accidentally contacting wastes
 - Keep wastes from migrating to people



What is Safe Disposal?

- Permanent isolation of radioactive wastes from humans and the environment
 - Keep people from accidentally contacting wastes
 - Inadvertent human intrusion
 - Keep wastes from migrating to people
 - Burrowing animals, roots
 - Vapor phase
 - Surface water / sediment transport
 - Groundwater



Options for Safe Disposal Depend on the Characteristics of the LILW

- **Very low activity**
- **Low activity, high volume** (mine/mill tailings, contaminated soils)
- **Low activity, low volume** (medical wastes, NPP operating wastes, most sealed radioactive sources)
- **High activity, low volume** (some sealed radioactive sources, activated metals from NPP decommissioning)
- **High activity, large volumes (SNF)**



Example: Sealed Radioactive Sources

- **Globally, 15% to 25% unwanted**
- **SRS nuclides may be long lived and/or high activity**
 - Sr-90
 - Cs-137
 - Pu-238
 - Am-241
 - Ra-226





U.S. NRC LLW Classification (10 CFR Part 61.55)

NRC Category	Description	Disposal Method
Class A	Least hazardous – short & long-lived waste that will not endanger inadvertent human intruder beyond 100 years	Near-Surface
Class B	More hazardous – short-lived wastes that will not endanger inadvertent intruder beyond 100 years	Near-Surface with 300 year waste stability
Class C	More hazardous – short and long-lived wastes that will not endanger inadvertent intruder beyond 500 years	Near-Surface with 300 year waste stability, and greater depth <u>or</u> 500 year intruder barrier
Greater-Than-Class C	Most hazardous of LLW - dangerous to intruder beyond 500 years. Must be disposed in geologic repository unless alternate method proposed by DOE and approved by NRC.	Geologic repository unless alternate method approved by NRC.



Boundary of Greater-Than-Class C LLW (10 CFR Part 61.55)

<u>Nuclide (half-life)</u>	<u>>Concentration</u>
----------------------------	--------------------------

Long-lived Radionuclides

	<u>(curies/m³)</u>
Carbon-14 (5,730yrs)	8
Carbon-14 in activated metal (5,730 yrs)	80
Nickel-59 in activated metal (75,000 yrs)	220
Niobium-94 in activated metal (20,000 yrs)	0.2
Technetium-99 (214,000 yrs)	3
Iodine-129 (16,000,000 yrs)	0.08

(nanocuries/gram)

Alpha-emitting transuranics (half-life greater than 5 yrs)	100
Plutonium-241 (14 yrs)	3,500
Curium-242 (162.8 days)	20,000

Short-lived Radionuclides

	<u>(curies/m³)</u>
Nickel-63 (100 yrs)	700
Nickel-63 in activated metal (100 yrs)	7,000
Strontium-90 (29 yrs)	7,000
Cesium-137 (30 yrs)	4,600



Options for Safe Disposal Depend on the Waste Characteristics

- Range of LILW Characteristics → Range of Disposal Options
 - Unlimited Release (below exemption level)
 - Decay in Storage
 - Shallow Land Burial
 - Intermediate-Depth Burial
 - Deep Geologic Repository



Disposal Options

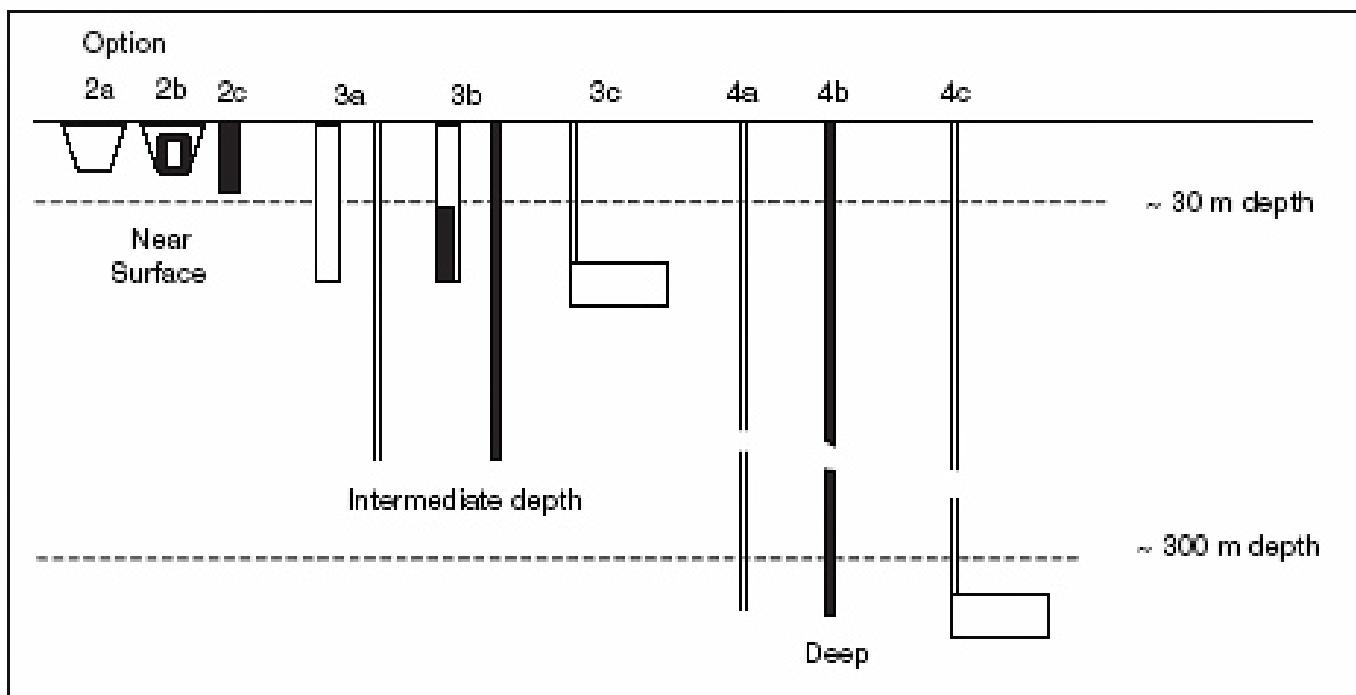


FIG. 6. Conceptual options suitable for the disposal of disused radioactive sources. Option 1 (decay and disposal as exempt waste) is not shown.



Options for Safe Disposal Very Short Half-Life (< 100 days)

- Permanent isolation of radioactive wastes from humans and the environment
 - Keep people from accidentally contacting wastes
 - Inadvertent human intrusion
 - Keep wastes from migrating to people
 - Burrowing animals, roots
 - Vapor phase
 - Groundwater

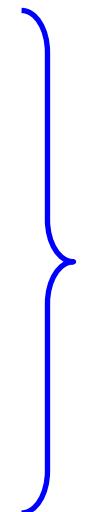


Decay in
Storage



Options for Safe Disposal Short Half-Life (5 yrs) and/or Very Low Activity

- Permanent isolation of radioactive wastes from humans and the environment
 - Keep people from accidentally contacting wastes
 - Inadvertent human intrusion
 - Keep wastes from migrating to people
 - Burrowing animals, roots
 - Vapor phase
 - Groundwater



**Shallow
Land Burial,
with Active
Maintenance**



Options for Safe Disposal Longer Half-Life and Higher Activities

- Permanent isolation of radioactive wastes from humans and the environment

- Keep people from accidentally contacting wastes

- Inadvertent human intrusion

- Keep wastes from migrating to people

- Burrowing animals, roots

- Vapor phase

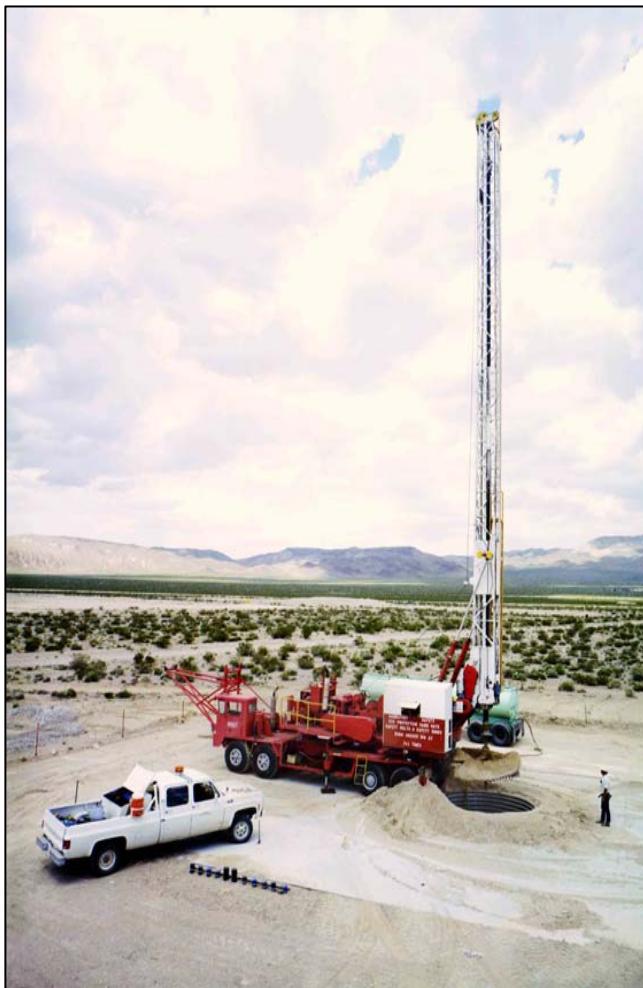
- Groundwater

Intermediate
Depth Burial or
Deep Geologic
Repository

Very dry site or very
long travel times or
engineered barriers



Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal



- Disposal at depths of 30 to 300 m
- Can also excavate & backfill trench or tunnel into mountain
- Boreholes least expensive for small volumes and have some advantages
- Boreholes 0.3 to 4 m in diameter

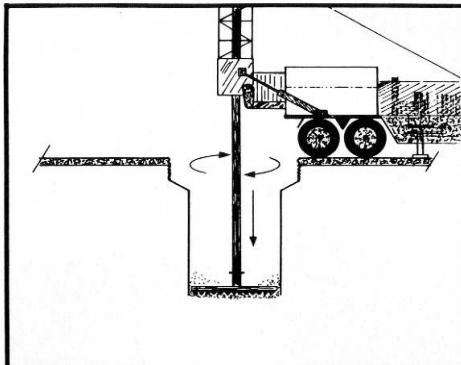
How deep is 30 m?

Placing monitoring
string in 36 m deep
GCD Borehole

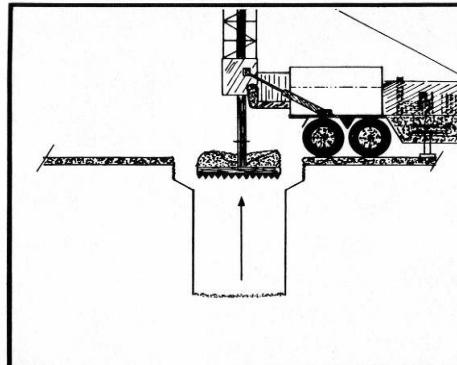




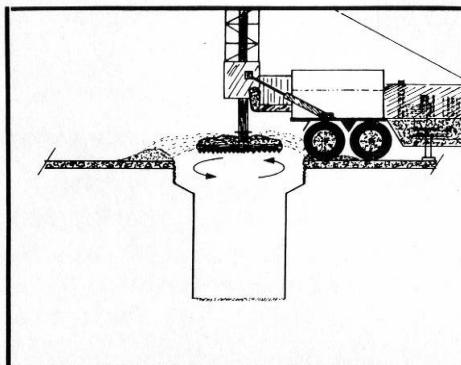
Low Technology Drilling in Weakly Consolidated Materials



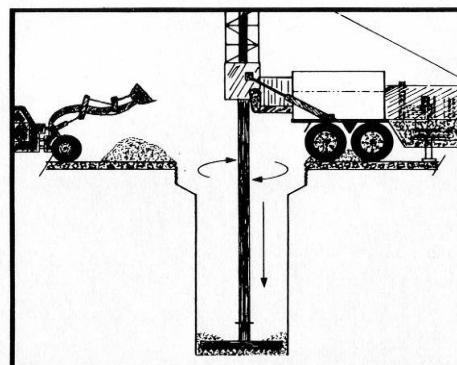
Auger drills into soil



Bit carries soil to surface



Backspinning throws soil off bit



Front-end loader removes soil



Low Technology Drilling in Weakly Consolidated Materials

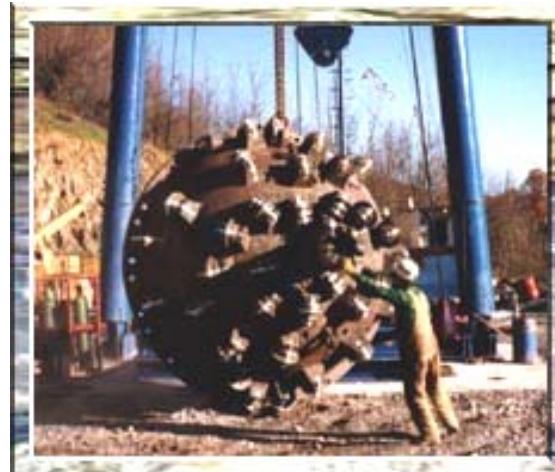




Drilling in Consolidated Materials



**5.5 m Bottom Hole Assembly. Intake Air Shaft
100 m Deep – Kentucky, USA**
Shaft Drillers International

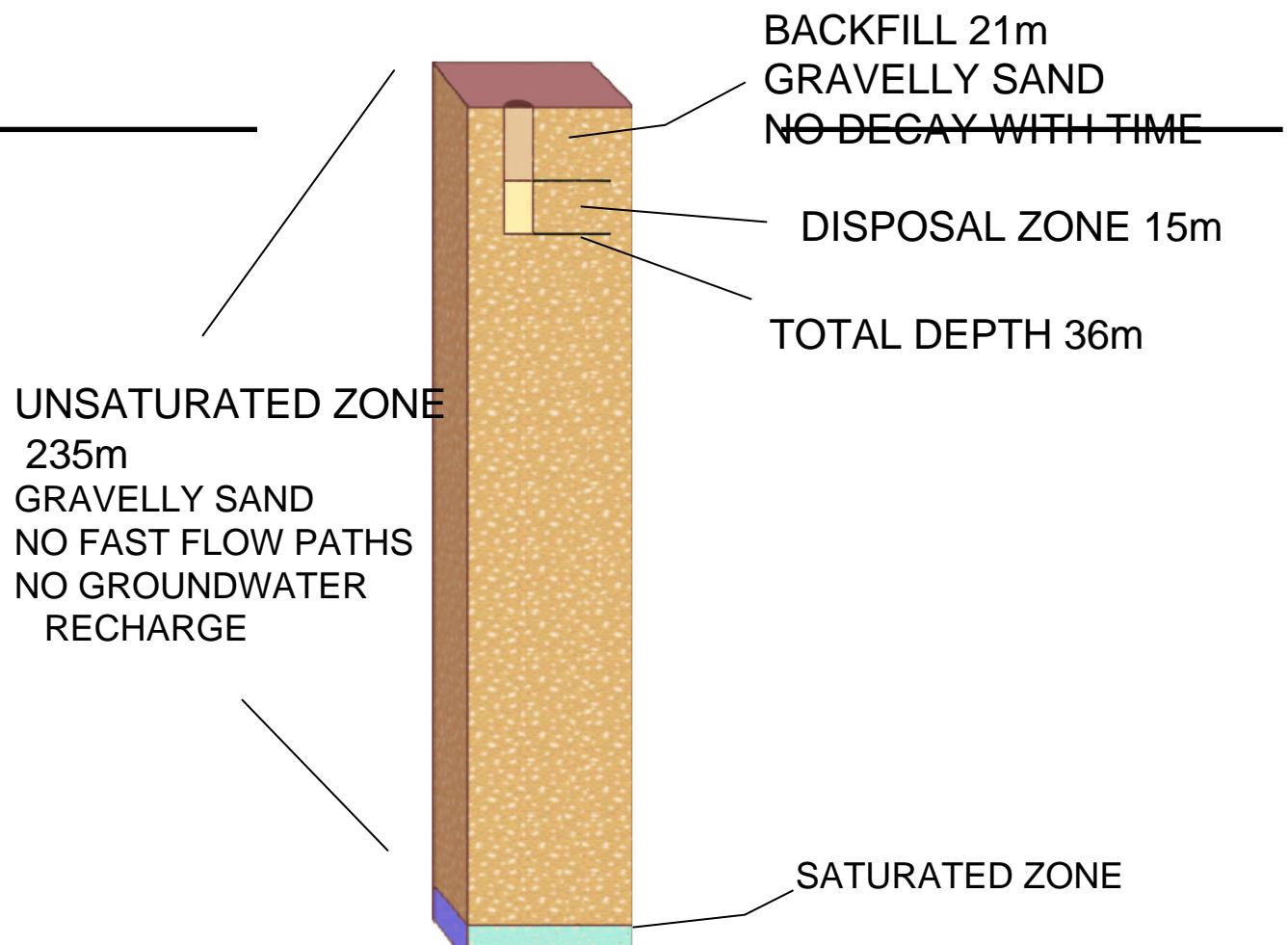


Drilling large diameter shafts in hard rock is much more difficult and expensive than drilling in weakly consolidated material



Use of Borehole Technology for Disposal in the United States

- Successfully used at DOE's Nevada Test Site (NTS)
- The Greater-Confinement-Disposal (GCD) boreholes.
 - 3 to 3.6 m in diameter
 - 36 m in depth



GREATER CONFINEMENT DISPOSAL BOREHOLE



Use of Borehole Technology for Disposal in the United States

- GCD operations 1983 - 1989
 - 4 boreholes High Specific Activity LLW, ~ 80 PBq (2,300 KCi)
 - 4 boreholes classified transuranic (TRU) wastes
 - Nuclear Weapons Accident Residue (NWAR)
 - Classified for national security reasons (not WIPP certifiable)



GCD Site Setting at the NTS

- ❖ Thick alluvium (sand), 235 m (~ 800 ft)
- ❖ Arid - 130 mm / year (5 inches / year)
- ❖ No “fast flow paths” through the sand
- ❖ No groundwater recharge
- ❖ Remote location
- ❖ Existing LLW disposal facility

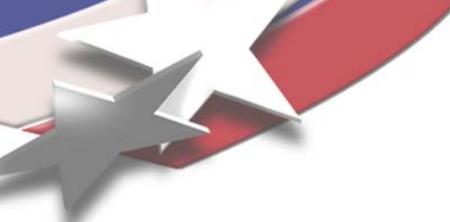


Area 5 of DOE's Nevada Test Site



Transfer of remote- handled reactor fuel cladding





Remote- disposal of reactor fuel cladding in GCD borehole





Sandia National Labs Roles in GCD

- Assisted with site characterization
- Conducted safety assessment for TRU wastes against U.S. EPA 10,000 year probabilistic standard 40 CFR 191



Physical Processes Addressed

- **Unsaturated Zone**

- Infiltration/Downward Advection (Liquid)
- Upward Advection (Gas)
- Upward Advection (Liquid)
- Thermal Convection
- Plant Uptake
- Bioturbation (Animals)
- Diffusion (Gas, Liquid)
- Adsorption
- Chemical Reactions (Precipitation, Complexation)
- → Preferential Pathways
- Subsidence
- Climate Change

- **Surficial Processes**

- Flooding
- Erosion
- Sediment Deposition
- Fracturing
- Subsidence
- Climate Change

- **Source Term/Containment Specific**

- Gas Production(organics)
- Radioactive Decay
- Waste Solubility
- Reactions (nuclear criticality)

- **Future Disruptive Events**

- Volcanism
- Techtonism
- Changes in Land Use (human)
- Inadvertent Human Intrusion



How GCD Boreholes Isolate Wastes > 10,000 Years

- Leach to Groundwater

- Vapor Phase

- Biological Processes
(roots, burrowing)

- Inadvertent Human
Intrusion



How GCD Boreholes Isolate Wastes > 10,000 years

- Leach to Groundwater → Arid climate, no fast flow paths in thick sand, no water recharge
- Vapor Phase → Travel time through sand backfill >> half-life of radon
- Biological Processes (roots, burrowing) → Wastes deeper than biologically active zone
- Inadvertent Human Intrusion → Wastes deeper than almost all normal human activities (foundations, basements, utilities, septic ...)



SANDIA REPORT
SAND2001-2977
Unlimited Release
Printed September 2001

Compliance Assessment Document for the Transuranic Wastes in the Greater Confinement Disposal Boreholes at the Nevada Test Site

Volume 2: Performance Assessment
Version 2.0

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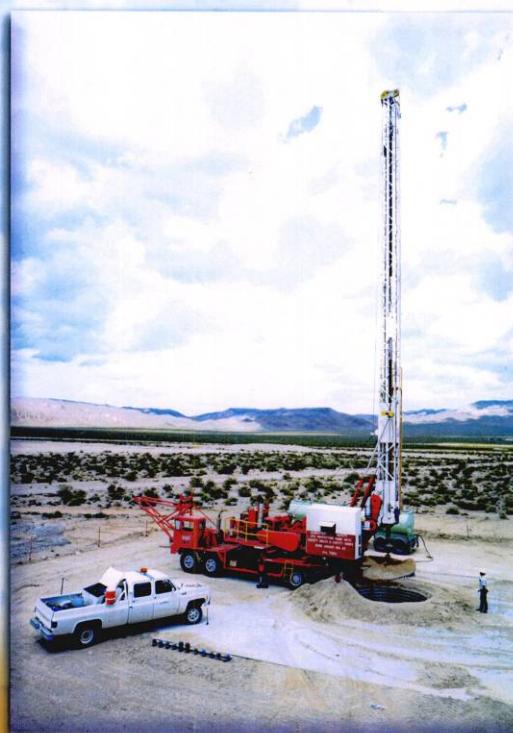
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http://infoserve.sandia.gov/sand_doc/2001/012977.pdf (72 Mb)



International Borehole Disposal Project (BOSS)

- IAEA Borehole Disposal of Sealed Sources (BOSS)
- Integrated system to help Member States with limited infrastructure and small inventories sealed sources
 - IAEA & Nuclear Energy Corporation of South African pilot project: small diameter boreholes (0.14 to 0.26 m) with depths ranging from 30 to 100 m
 - Wastes doubly encapsulated in stainless steel capsules (Engineered Isolation)
 - Being considered by several other nations in Africa, Middle East, South East Asia, and Latin America
 - Developing “*Generic Post-Closure Safety Assessment for Borehole Disposal Facilities*”



IAEA's BOSS



**Photograph of the BOSS Outer Disposal Container
(11 cm in diameter) with the Two Sizes of Inner
Capsules on the bottom of the Photograph
(from IAEA, draft, 2006)**



IAEA's BOSS

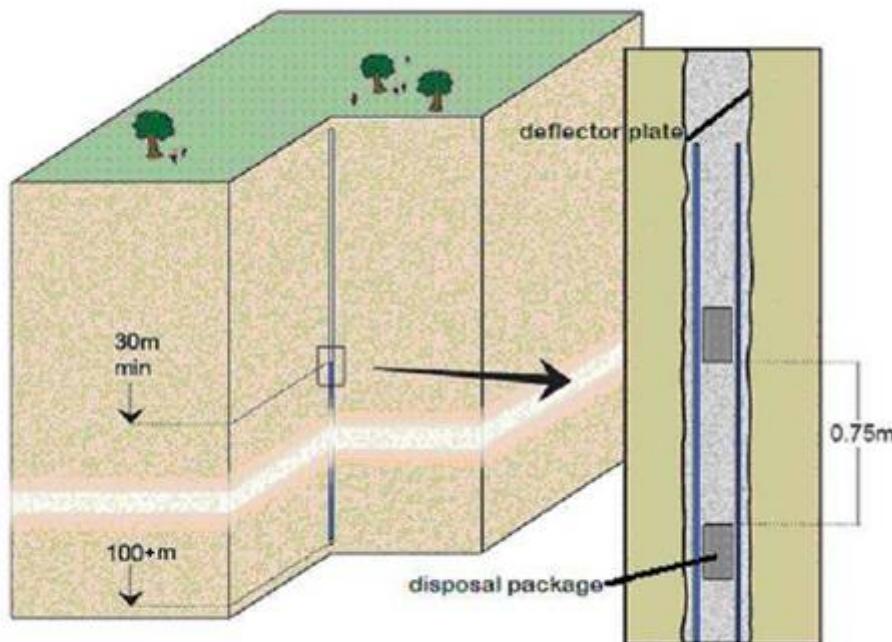
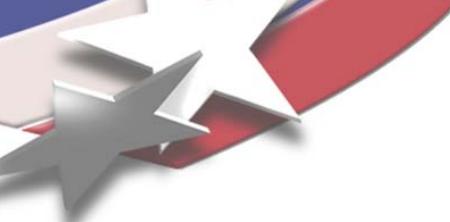


Diagram of the Possible Implementation of the IAEA's BOSS Disposal System (from IAEA, draft, 2006)

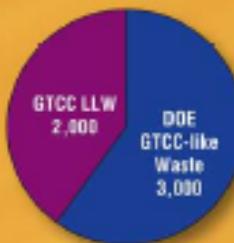
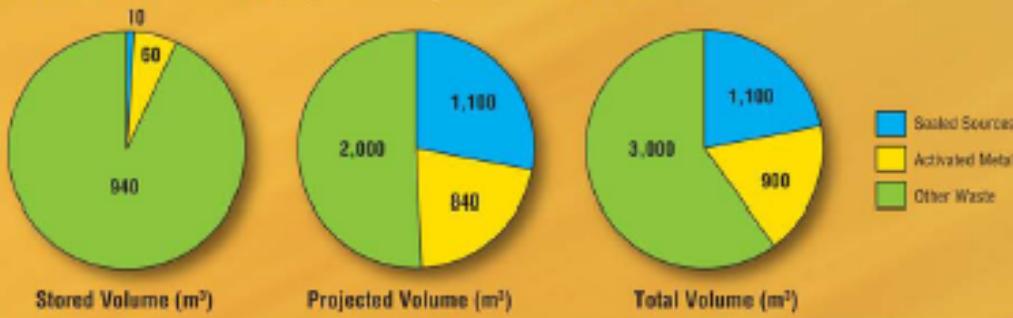


U.S. Currently Considering Intermediate-Depth Disposal for GTCC LLW

- **Advanced Notice of Intent – May 11, 2005**
- **Notice of Intent – Spring 07**
- **Draft EIS – Jan 08**
- **Final EIS – Oct 08**
- **Report to Congress on Disposal Alternatives – Oct 08**
- **ROD – TBD (following Congressional action on disposal alternatives report)**

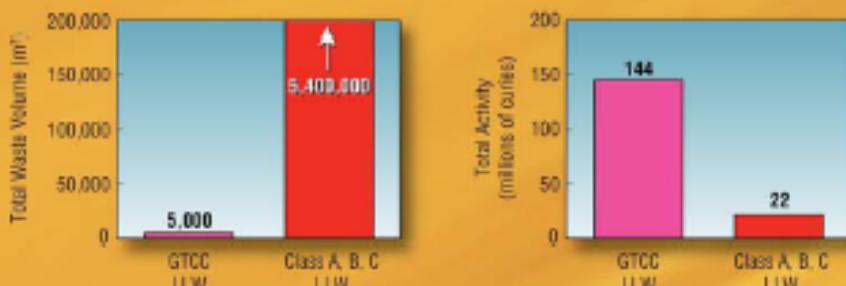
GTCC LLW and DOE GTCC-like Waste Inventory

About 20% of the total inventory* is in storage with the remainder projected to be generated by 2062. Inventory consists of three waste categories: sealed sources, activated metal, and other wastes. Other wastes include materials that are not activated metal or sealed sources such as contaminated equipment, sludges, debris and filters.



About 3,000 m³ of the total inventory of 5,000 m³ is DOE GTCC-like waste.

The total volume of GTCC LLW and DOE GTCC-like waste is much smaller than the volume of LLW generated over the same period of time, but contains more activity.



LLW volumes and activities were obtained from the DOE MIMS database, and are projected to 2062. The GTCC LLW entries are the total for GTCC LLW and DOE GTCC-like waste.

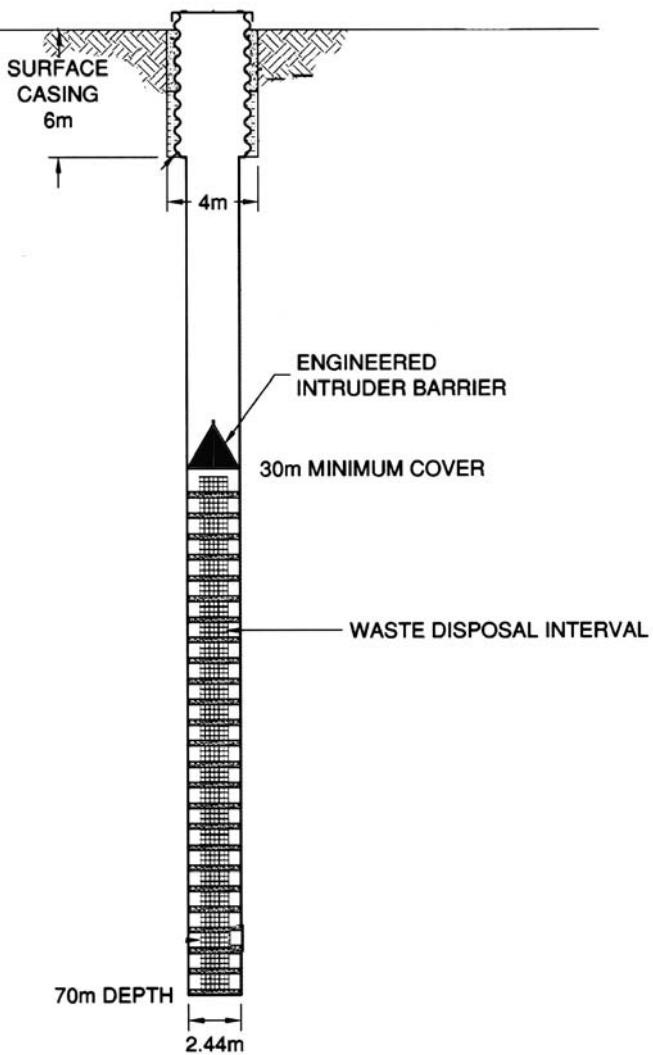


Potential GTCC Disposal Alternatives

- Enhanced near surface
- Intermediate depth borehole
- Geologic repository



Possible Conceptual Design of Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal for GTCC LLW





Potential Advantages of Intermediate-Depth Borehole Disposal

- Cost effective means for intermediate depth disposal
- Amenable to intermittent or low-volume operations
- Technology is globally available
- Inadvertent human intrusion is unlikely because of depth of burial
- Inadvertent human intrusion is unlikely because of small footprint
- Can use small intrusion deflector to protect large volume of waste
- Can dispose of unshielded, remote-handled wastes
- Easily co-located with existing or other planned trench disposal facilities
- On the correct setting, can provide geologic isolation of long-lived LILW



**Goal: Safe, Permanent Disposal
of Unwanted Radioactive Wastes**