

PPC 9480.1984(01)

LAND DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS WASTES - USE OF NUCLEAR TEST SITES

JUN 12 1984

Mr. Lou A. Bellone, #339789
Eastham Unit
P.O. Box 16
Lovelady, TX 75851

Dear Mr. Bellone:

Thank you for your recent letter to Administrator Ruckelshaus regarding the use of cavities produced as a result of nuclear weapons testing for the disposal of hazardous waste. Mr. Ruckelshaus has asked me to respond to your letter.

The major concern in the disposal of hazardous waste is in containing the waste so that the potential for migration of hazardous constituents is minimized. For this reason, EPA generally requires the installation of a liner that will prevent migration of hazardous constituents during the active life of the land disposal facility and a cover to minimize infiltration of precipitation at facility closure.

The deposition of hazardous wastes in deep underground rock formations that are capable of containing the wastes without use of liners or covers is not currently among the options that EPA allows, although we are actively developing regulations to address this type of disposal. However, severe fracturing of underground rock formations can be expected as a result of underground nuclear testing. Such fracturing would likely provide conduits through which hazardous constituents could migrate. Furthermore, prediction of the routes of migration would be impossible. Additional detonation where hazardous wastes have been placed could result in the generation of hazardous byproducts of unknown character and contribute to the dispersal of hazardous constituents underground. Nuclear test sites, therefore, are probably unsuitable for hazardous waste disposal.

I hope that this information is helpful to you.
Mr. Ruckelshaus deeply appreciates your concern for the proper

disposal of hazardous waste.

Sincerely yours,

Kenneth A. Shuster
Chief, Land Disposal Branch
Office of Solid Waste

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