

Waste to be Consolidated at Idaho Site Before Shipment to WIPP

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is consolidating defense transuranic wastes at its Idaho Site for testing and treatment prior to shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico for disposal.

Over the course of several years, 14 waste generator sites will ship transuranic, or TRU, wastes to Idaho for processing. Most of the sites do not have the infrastructure or certified programs necessary to test and treat wastes to meet strict disposal standards for WIPP.



Consolidating TRU wastes in Idaho allows DOE to take advantage of the facility's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP) and compaction operations. When DOE initiated the AMWTP, the intent was to use the facility to treat wastes from other DOE sites, as well as that stored in Idaho. As a result, DOE evaluated the environmental impacts of treating offsite wastes. An agreement between DOE and the state of Idaho allows DOE to accept wastes at AMWTP for treatment, as long as that waste is treated within six months of receipt and shipped out of state for disposal within six months of treatment.

This approach will enhance DOE's ability to clean up the nation's TRU waste and reduce potential risks to human health and the environment associated with long-term waste storage.

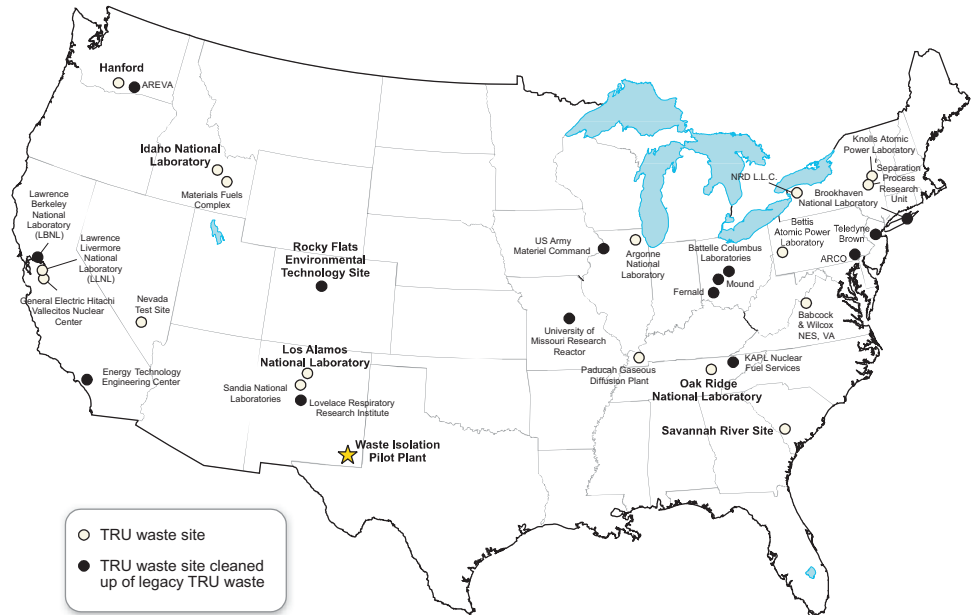
TRU waste is a byproduct of the nation's nuclear defense programs. The two categories of TRU waste are based on level of radioactivity. Contact-handled TRU waste can be handled under controlled conditions without any shielding beyond the container itself; remote-handled TRU waste is handled and transported in shielded containers. Approximately 96 percent of the waste destined for WIPP is contact-handled TRU waste. WIPP is not approved to receive liquid waste.

An official conducts an inspection of a TRUPACT-II shipping container. Other Nuclear Regulatory Commission-approved shipping containers include the HalfPACT and the RH72-B.

Using state-approved routes and shipping protocols, thousands of shipments have arrived safely at WIPP from TRU waste sites around the country. Established protocols and safeguards for shipping TRU waste include:

- Only highly qualified drivers work for WIPP. Drivers work in pairs to assure the truck and payload are attended at all times.
- TRU waste shipments are tracked by satellite and monitored from a secure control center at WIPP 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Designated federal, state and tribal officials can monitor the shipments.
- WIPP drivers notify state officials two hours before entering each state.
- Prior to departing a TRU waste site, state police inspect WIPP trucks to Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Level VI standards, the most rigorous in the commercial trucking industry. WIPP drivers are required to stop and check their trucks and payload every 150 miles or three hours. The trucks are also subject to inspections at state ports of entry.

- WIPP has trained more than 26,000 emergency response professionals along the routes to respond effectively in the event of a WIPP-related accident.
- Shipping containers were approved for use by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission following a series of tests that included a 30-foot drop onto a steel surface and a 30-minute burn test in jet fuel at 1475° F to ensure the containers would remain leak-tight.



Sites whose waste will be processed at DOE's Idaho Site:

- Argonne National Laboratory, IL
- Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory, PA
- Babcock & Wilcox, PA
- General Electric Hitachi Vallecitos Nuclear Center, CA
- Hanford Reservation, WA
- Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, NY
- Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory Nuclear Fuel Services, TN
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, CA
- Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, CA
- Nevada Test Site, NV
- NRD L.L.C., NY
- Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, KY
- Sandia National Laboratories, NM
- Separations Process Research Unit, NY

For more information

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