



Nuclear Information and Resource Service

For a Nuclear-Free, Carbon-Free World

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Consolidated “Interim” Storage

Consolidated/Centralized “Interim” Storage (CIS) Nuclear Waste Dumps would be sites to which high level nuclear power waste (in the form of irradiated nuclear fuel) would be moved before being shipped again to a currently-non-existent permanent repository.

Such facilities would allow the storage of commercial irradiated fuel (sometimes called “spent” or “used” fuel) from all the US nuclear power reactors across the country to an additional nuclear sacrifice area. As of 2019, there are two *proposed* Consolidated “Interim” Storage Dumps—one in Texas and one in New Mexico. There have been suggestions for locations in other states and one site was licensed in Utah but never operated.

Why are supposedly “Interim” Dumps a BAD IDEA? They are dangerous for several reasons:

- Unnecessary transport of deadly waste spreading and multiplying risks and hazards
- Failure to improve existing vulnerability of nuclear waste storage technology
- Increases the number of radioactive sites
- Supposedly “interim” sites could become permanent by default
- Consolidating waste in one place can lead to Reprocessing
- Reprocessing makes worse waste, spreads contamination and leads to proliferation of nuclear weapons.

If consolidated sites are opened, the irradiated fuel would move multiple times through our communities—from the reactors that made it to the supposedly temporary site and again to a permanent repository. The transport of irradiated nuclear fuel is extremely risky. (See NIRS **Hot Cargos** factsheet.)

An accident or attack on a high-level waste shipment could permanently contaminate a huge area and spread radioactivity very far. Land, water and air within 50 miles or more of the accident site could be contaminated with uninhabitable radiation levels. Even with no incident, routine shipments legally emit radiation.

It is likely that an “interim” site could become a de-facto permanent storage site if a morally and scientifically sound permanent system to isolate the waste is not developed.

Consolidated waste sites are not designed to store irradiated nuclear fuel for the millions of years it remains radioactively dangerous.

Consolidating irradiated nuclear fuel could lead to **reprocessing** which makes the nuclear waste problems much worse and leads to increased nuclear weapons proliferation dangers. No reprocessing sites have ever been cleaned up...they are costing billions to prevent from getting worse.



Photo courtesy of No Nuclear Waste Aqui

Consolidated “Interim” Storage is ILLEGAL

The current federal law, 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act and 1987 Amendments, states that consolidated “interim” storage is allowed **only if** a permanent repository is operating. Moreover, the provision of the law allowed a “temporary” site **expired**, making any such facility **illegal**.

Despite the illegality, two private corporations applied to open such sites and the NRC is proceeding with their applications.

Application 1: **Interim Storage Partners (ISP)/ Waste Control Specialists (WCS)/ Orano USA and NAC International** seek to store **40,000** metric tonnes on their TX site bordering NM. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is processing the application. Numerous parties are objecting legally. WCS runs a “low-level” radioactive waste and hazardous treatment and disposal site for nuclear power and weapons waste in Andrews County, Texas at the proposed site.

Application 2: The **Eddy Lea Energy Alliance** in conjunction with **Holtec International** is applying for a license to “temporarily” store **100,000 metric tons** (with **potential for 173,000**) of irradiated nuclear fuel in holes in the ground in SE New Mexico, east of Carlsbad. Six parties both locally and across the country intervened including industry. NRC denied the objections and standing and some are appealing.

These corporations need to change the federal law to allow them to make money on allegedly “interim” consolidated sites, while all liability is borne by the public. They want:

- Legalizing consolidated “interim” storage *before* there is a permanent repository.

- Shift of liability for and ownership of the high-level waste from nuclear power companies that generated and own it to the US Department of Energy aka US taxpayers.
- Use of Nuclear Waste Fund money collected from nuclear electricity ratepayers for **permanent** isolation to be redirected to them for so called “interim” storage.

New Mexicans and Texans with local, regional and national allies are working to prevent the proposed parking lot dumps. Such dumps, and the 40 years of thousands of shipments to them, not only threaten safety, security and economics; they violate the principles of environmental justice. People of color would be affected disproportionately if nuclear waste were brought to the Holtec/Eddy Lea or the ISP/WCS sites.

Transport communities do not consent. New Mexicans and Texans do not consent to either of the proposed parking lot dumps and are fighting to avoid the environmental injustice and the unnecessary shipment of irradiated high level nuclear waste through and to their communities.

What Should Be Done? The amount of waste made should be limited and efforts focused on isolating that which has been made. As of 2018 there were ~80,000 metric tonnes of commercial irradiated fuel in the US with ~2,000 more generated every year. Rather than move waste thousands of miles back and forth across the country, it should be stored more securely in Hardened On-Site Storage, HOSS, in containers that can be monitored, inspected and replaceable, concepts supported by residents of every state. Better storage containers and systems are needed no matter where the waste is located, since it must be isolated for literally millions of years.