JAN 13 1982

$30 Million Energy Unit Proposal

Knoxville Journal Dec 29 1981

Sends to Cuddeback For your information D.N. Mayfield

Oak Ridge N-Waste Disposal Eyed

By TOM McCORD

KNOXVILLE — The Energy Department, needing a way to get rid of waste tinged with radioactivity and cancer-causing PCBs, has proposed a $30 million garbage disposer for nuclear energy reservation in Oak Ridge.

The rotating 8-feet-by-20-foot cylinder would burn contaminated oils and solids hauled to the site by truck, DOE spokesmen said yesterday.

J.P. WING, chief of the Energy Department's environmental protection branch at Oak Ridge, said there are only two such incinerator operations in the United States.

But the others — in Texas and Arkansas — are commercial and do not have a Nuclear Regulatory Commission license to handle radioactive waste, Wing said.

"The materials that we would be putting in there are contaminated with trace amounts of uranium," Wing said.

OAK RIDGE, secretly built during World War II as the construction site of the first atomic bomb, now encompasses three plants that generate radioactive waste that would be incinerated in the cylinder.

Among them is the Y-12 plant, which employs more than 6,000 people and makes parts for nuclear bombs. All three are operated by Union Carbide Corp. under a contract with the Energy Department.

The other two facilities are Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Gaseous Diffusion Plant, which enriches uranium for use in nuclear reactors. In addition, some waste from the Energy Department's gaseous diffusion plants in Paducah, Ky., and Portsmouth, Ohio, would be shipped along interstate highways to the incinerator.

UP TO 20% of the garbage that would be incinerated would contain PCBs — polychlorinated biphenyls — which are synthetic compounds used for more than 50 years in industry.

Congress banned manufacture of PCBs in 1976 after it was shown they possibly could cause cancer. Other regulations require storage of existing PCBs.

Under the Energy Department's plan, the contaminated waste would be analyzed, blended and fed into the incinerator, Wing said.

A SHREDDER would chew whole drums of solid wastes into pieces before they were fed into the rotating cylinder, which would burn at temperatures up to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit.

The gases from the incinerator would be cooled and treated, and some air, water and other emissions would occur, Wing said.

"The only things that have to be dealt with would be the ash which would contain the radioactive elements," Wing said. "It would be about as radioactive as ash from a coal-fired steam plant."

A FEDERAL Environmental Protection Agency permit and several state permits would be necessary for the incinerator, which would require about 20 workers to operate, Wing said.

DOE spokesman Jim Alexander said the original deadline for public comment on the draft environmental impact statement was yesterday but "We are, at EPA's request, extending the deadline two weeks."

Money to build the incinerator, estimated by Wing to cost $30 million, would have to be approved by Congress.

MDNS 019281