

STATE OF COLORADO

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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RETURN ORIGINAL TO PDR, HQ.



Ken Rosen
Governor
Patricia A. Sullivan, MD, MPH
Executive Director

January 12, 1993

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Region IV
Uranium Recovery Field Office
Attn: Ramon Hall, Director
Box 25325
Denver, CO 80225

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Re: Umetco-Uravan Facility in Montrose County

Dear Mr. Hall:

I am sending you this information because of your interest in the Umetco-Uravan facility. Umetco Mineral Corporation's ("Umetco") has requested to amend their Colorado Radioactive Materials License #660-02. Umetco's request involves accepting and disposing of radioactive materials from sites located within the State of Colorado ("offsite wastes") at their Uravan project site located in Montrose County, Colorado.

Please find enclosed a briefing paper concerning project background, application status and the issues.

The Department's Radiation Control Division ("Division") informed Umetco, in a December 23, 1992 letter, that Umetco's license amendment application was sufficient in detail to deem the application complete and adequate. Thus, the Division now has the information needed to make a finding regarding the application.

The Division is preparing its preliminary licensing decision in the form of a Preliminary Licensing Statement/Proposed License ("PLS/PL"). The Division intends to incorporate detailed conditions in the proposed license. Once it is issued and noticed, the PLS/PL will be subject to a 90-day public comment period with an opportunity for a formal hearing. The PLS/PL is expected to be issued this month with the formal hearing to be held in April 1993.

If you have any questions, please call either Donald Simpson, Uranium and Special Projects Unit Leader or Greg Brand, Professional Engineer, at (303) 692-3030.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Quillin, Director
Radiation Control Division

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RMQ/msm

Enclosure: as stated
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BRIEFING PAPER
on
Umetco-Uravan Facility
Colorado Radioactive Materials License #660-02

Umetco-Uravan Disposal of Radioactive Materials from
Sites Located Within Colorado

Background Information

The Umetco-Uravan site is a uranium mill and tailings disposal site located in western Montrose County, approximately 90 miles south of Grand Junction. Currently, there are 10,000,000 cubic yards of uranium mill tailings that have been disposed of at the site. The Uravan mill is no longer in operation.

Umetco is currently reclaiming the Uravan Site under a federal court-ordered Consent Decree and Remedial Action Plan ("RAP") and a Colorado Radioactive Materials License. Current actions related to site reclamation are:

- 1) Mill decommissioning;
- 2) Ground water remediation;
- 3) Evaporation pond operation; and
- 4) Tailings pile repository closure.

In the spring of 1991, after appropriate public notice, the Colorado Department of Health - Radiation Control Division ("CDH-RCD") granted a license amendment which permits the potential receipt and disposal of radioactive material from the U.S. Department of Energy's Naturita UMTRCA Title One Site.

Application Status

On June 30, 1992, Umetco submitted a request to amend their radioactive materials license for the Uravan Site. Umetco requested to receive and dispose of radioactive mill tailings, contaminated soils and contaminated debris from various uranium, thorium and vanadium sites, and other radioactive materials sites located within the State of Colorado ("offsite wastes").

Umetco is proposing to accept offsite wastes through 1998. Pursuant to the Consent Decree, final closure of the disposal repositories is scheduled to be completed December 31, 1998.

The CDH-RCD requested clarification of the original proposal. All additional information requested was received by early December and is being evaluated by CDH-RCD staff.

Part 4.17 of the Colorado's Radiation Regulations provides that any person may apply to the Department for approval of proposed procedures to dispose of radioactive material.

CDH-RCD is preparing its preliminary licensing decision in the form of a Preliminary Licensing Statement/Proposed License ("PLS/PL"). The PLS will specify the criteria necessary to issue the license amendment and how Umetco meets or does not meet these criteria. CDH-RCD intends to incorporate detailed conditions in the proposed license. Once issued and noticed, the PLS/PL will be subject to a 90-day public comment period with an opportunity for a formal hearing.

It is anticipated that the CDH-RCD will send the PLS/PL out for public comment in January.

Issues

CDH-RCD has been contacted by groups and individuals both supporting and opposing Umetco's amendment proposal.

The primary issues are:

- 1) Transportation of materials to the site;
- 2) Concerns about receipt of radioactive wastes from the eastern slope and from outside the State of Colorado; and
- 3) Analysis of alternatives to disposal at Uravan (alternate sites and/or disposal at site of generation).

With respect to the first issue, either the Colorado State Patrol or local hazardous material response teams would react to a highway accident involving radioactive materials. While Montrose County does not have a hazardous materials response team, the State Patrol does have such a team located in Grand Junction. The State Patrol also regulates the transport of radioactive materials in the State.

The existing radioactive materials license for Uravan contains a provision which requires compliance by Umetco and its contractors with all such transport regulations. However, this license condition would not be applicable to an independent contractor delivering materials to Uravan.

The receipt of waste at Uravan from outside the State of Colorado is another issue. Umetco's amendment application states that acceptance of waste will be limited to wastes found within the State of Colorado. This should allay concerns about wastes from other states finding its way into Colorado. Eastern slope radioactive wastes may find their way to Uravan.

The third major issue expressed is the analysis of alternative actions. For any individual radioactive waste site in Colorado there are two alternatives, reclaim the material on-site or dispose of the material offsite at a licensed facility. The decision as to which alternative to use is that of the licensee or owner of the material to be disposed.

For those who choose to use the disposal offsite option, at the present time there is only one facility that is licensed to receive the type of waste discussed in the Umetco proposal. This is the Envirocare facility in Clive, Utah. Other sites may come on line in the future.

Approval of the Umetco proposal would not require that waste from the sites described go to Uravan. The Uravan site would be one option for disposal.

Umetco's proposal has stated the following reasons why disposal at Uravan should be allowed:

1. the application is limited to accepting wastes from sites located within Colorado,
2. the Uravan Site is already a permanent disposal site for similar material,
3. the use of the Uravan Site will help minimize the generation of numerous small radioactive waste disposal sites through out Colorado, and
4. Umetco has a demonstrated track record for safely and responsibly managing similar material at the Uravan Site.