



Nuclear Information and Resource Service

*For a Nuclear-Free, Carbon-Free World*

[WWW.NIRS.ORG](http://WWW.NIRS.ORG)

6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 340

Takoma Park, MD 20912

(301) 270- NIRS (6477)

## Parking Lot Nuclear Dumps

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

Such facilities would allow the storage of commercial irradiated nuclear fuel (sometimes called “spent” or “used” fuel) from all over the country to an additional nuclear sacrifice area. As of 2017, there are two proposed Centralized Parking Lot 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 Parking Lot Dumps a BAD IDEA?**

Parking lot dumps are dangerous non-solutions for several reasons:

- Unnecessary transport of deadly waste compounding risks and hazards
- Failure to improve existing vulnerability of nuclear waste storage technology
- Increases the number of radioactive sites
- Supposedly “interim” sites could become de facto permanent
- 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 centralized parking lot 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.

Centralized facilities 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*

## Centralized Parking Lot Dumps are ILLEGAL

The current federal law, 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act and 1987 Amendments, states that a centralized storage facility 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: **Waste Control Specialists**, in conjunction with cask-makers **TN Americas LLC** (an **Areva** subsidiary) and **NAC International Inc.**, would store **5,000 metric tonnes** with potential to **expand to 40,000** or more on their TX site bordering NM. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) declared their application ready for legal review in January 2017, but later suspended the process until the WCS company is bought up by a new parent corporation, expected by 2018. WCS operates a “low-level” radioactive waste and hazardous treatment and disposal site for nuclear power and weapons waste site in Andrews County, Texas.

Application 2: The **Eddy Lea Energy Alliance** in conjunction with **Holtec International** is applying for a license to “temporarily” store **100,000 metric tonnes** (with **potential for 120,000**) of irradiated nuclear fuel in holes in the ground in SE New Mexico, east of Carlsbad. As of late 2017 their application had not been declared complete so no public comments or interventions have begun yet.

There will be legal opportunities to comment and intervene in these licensing proceedings.

**These corporations are hopeful the laws will change to allow them to make money while all liability is borne by the public.** They want:

- The shift of liability for and ownership of the high-level waste from nuclear utilities that generated and own it to the US Department of Energy aka US taxpayers.
- Legalizing centralized “interim” parking lot dumps before a permanent repository is operating.
- Use of Nuclear Waste Fund money collected 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 and 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 Eddy Lea/Holtec or the WCS sites.

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 should be limited and efforts focused on isolating that which has been generated. As of 2017 there are ~ 78,000 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, a concept supported by organizations in 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.