



**DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL**  
1200 Missouri Ave, Suite 102, Bismarck ND 58501  
[sean@drcinfo.com](mailto:sean@drcinfo.com) • [www.drcinfo.com](http://www.drcinfo.com)

## News Release

### **DRC Members Raise Major Concerns about Radioactivity Rules**

**Bismarck, ND---** Dakota Resource Council said today that, while the North Dakota Department of Health's proposed rules on tracking radioactive oil waste are a long overdue step forward, the proposal to increase radioactivity ten-fold would put the public at risk.

Linda Weiss, Belfield ND and chair of the DRC Board, said, "We have serious concerns about the ability and willingness of the Dalrymple Administration to deal with increasing the level of radioactivity allowed in North Dakota special and industrial waste landfills when they have been unable to handle the current level. It is important to include in our public discussion scientific evidence that shows increased levels would not be safe for the people who live and work nearby. The lackadaisical attitude of current state officials makes this potential increased level of radioactivity alarming."

The Administration contracted with Argonne Laboratories to provide backup information for their goal to allow higher levels of radioactivity in oil waste disposed of in North Dakota. Carol Ventsch, a DRC Board member from New Town ND, said, "The Administration had the Argonne information for at least 120 days and they kept it secret as they picked out the parts they liked. The North Dakota public should have at least that long to review this and other information as we discuss the proposed rule changes."

Ventsch said, "For that reason, DRC members request that the Health Department extend the time period for comments to 120 days and add three more hearings in Noonan, New Town and Dickinson."

In addition, the information the Administration used from the Argonne report is not representative of real life situations in the oilfield. These include:

1. Argonne assumes those dealing with radioactive waste are currently using proper protective equipment to limit exposure. This is not an accurate assumption and calls into question the accuracy of what a "safe" level of exposure is.
2. Not all waste streams containing radioactivity are included in the study. One of the largest waste streams, drill cuttings, is excluded as well as chemically enhanced brine.
3. Samples were not collected by Argonne Laboratory and that calls into question the chain of custody and where the samples originated.
4. Scientists across the globe agree that there is no safe level of radioactivity to which to be exposed.

We expect oil industry representatives to say that the everyday exposures we receive from oil waste radioactivity is like granite counter tops, bananas, Brazil nuts and even medical testing. For the most part, these single-time, low-level exposures do not equate with the continuous exposure people are subjected to in the oil fields.

The American Cancer Society clearly warns about limiting medical tests that require radioactive exposure to only when they are absolutely needed, especially in the case of children who are more susceptible to illness from exposure. The Administration's casual repeating of oil industry's flippant remarks about x-rays shows a troubling dismissal of legitimate concerns about radioactivity in oil field waste.

Regarding tracking and monitoring of radioactivity in oil waste, the proposed rules should have been proposed long ago. Mostly, they are a good first step towards a tracking system in North Dakota. Unfortunately, there are many holes in the rules as they are currently written. The rules are lacking in multiple ways, but one extremely important omission is, there are no clear and defined techniques to measure radioactive loads in terms of quantity or specific measures for tracking loads that are turned away from landfills for exceeding the proposed 50pCi increase. Landfills are given a five-day window to report a rejected load to the NDDH, but what happens to the radioactive waste after a transporter is declined acceptance?

Weiss said, "There are a lot of unanswered questions. The proposed rule process started over two years ago at the request of the oil industry. The Administration has a long track record of doing the bidding of the industry rather than protecting the health and safety of the people who live here. Not only should the public have more time to talk about the consequences of these proposed rules, but we should be very concerned about the dangers of increasing radioactivity by ten times."

###

*Founded in 1978, Dakota Resource Council is a statewide, multi-issues organization bringing together farmers, ranchers, small business owners, workers and other North Dakotans to address issues that affect their lives and livelihoods.*