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Nuclear waste disposal studied

By D.L. Horton

Nebraska probably will enter into a compact with one of two groups of midwestern states to establish a regional disposal site for low-level nuclear waste, Judy Lange, assistant legal council for the Nebraska Department of Environmental Control, said.

Since most midwestern states produce little of the waste — generated by industrial, medical and research users and having a very short radioactive life — they are forming compacts to choose a regional disposal site. Only three places in the country now accept low-level waste. The costs of investigating a site, supervising disposal of the wastes, and securing and monitoring the site until the waste is no longer hazardous is too high for most states to pay individually.

Water table depth, soil porosity and stability, the cost and potential problem with transportation, current land use and possible conflicts with those users, and the number of people living in the area are some of the factors looked at in choosing a site.

No site has been chosen in any of the 16 states involved, Lange said. Representatives from each state have been

meeting to explore their needs for disposal.

The compacts probably will be finished by January, she said. After one of the compacts is approved by the states' representatives, each state's legislature must adopt the compact without changes. Congress also must approve the compact for it to become law.

The compacts may be introduced in some state legislatures this year but Nebraska will not introduce until January 1983 the compact its representatives approve, she said.

Both companies assume a private contractor will operate the site. She said private companies have more expertise in nuclear disposal and it would "be a headache for the state to run a site like that." Finding and running a site costs over several million dollars, Lange said.

A fee will be charged each time waste is disposed to pay for monitoring and securing the site.

The fee ensures that the state or federal government will have funds to secure the site even if the contractor goes out of business.

Another advantage is a private company can be held responsible for accidents. If the state operated the site, it could not be sued.

Through an agreement with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Nebraska became an "agreement state" and can regulate and issue licenses to disposal site contractors. If the state operated the site, it would have to give up the "agreement state" status and submit to NRC regulation because it can't regulate itself.

The state's only cost is sending representatives to the meetings and helping set up a commission to oversee the compact. Nebraska also must accept the responsibility that a site will be located here.

"No one has volunteered to host the site," Lange said, "but Illinois is toying with the idea because it generates 50 percent of the waste in one (compact) group."

After a site has been selected, the host state must try to get it licensed, Lange said.

Vincent H. Dreeszen, director of UNL's Conservation and Survey Division, said his staff worked with the state's environmental control office to make up comprehensive requirements for site investigations.


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Photo by Dave Bentz

"Let's see . . . I need a video basketball game, a new Big Wheel, about 100 Hot Wheels cars . . ." Zachery Simms seems to be thinking as he savors a candy cane and waits for Santa Wednesday night at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house.

NU credit union open; 'healthier than ever'

The manager of the University of Nebraska Federal Credit Union said they have received about 50 calls from people wondering if that credit union is closing, after an article in last week's Daily Nebraskan described the closing of the ASUN Credit Union.

Bob Meyer said the NU credit union "is alive and healthier than ever, with over 3,000 members and \$3.5 million in assets."

He said several people called or came into the credit union and when they were told it was the ASUN credit union that was closing, they said "Oh, well, if you're open, we won't take out our money."

Meyer said he did not know if anyone had withdrawn money or closed their accounts because of the misunderstanding.

"For every person who voices an opinion, someone acts and keeps silent," he said. "But a fairly significant number have voiced concern."

The NU credit union is chartered by the federal government, and each account is insured for up to \$100,000 through a government agency.

Membership is restricted to faculty and permanent employees of the entire NU system, he said. He added that both the NU Medical Center and UNO have credit unions, but some people from UNO belong to the NU credit union.

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