

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



EPA'S Clean Air Act Requirements: Uranium Mill Tailings Radon Emissions Rulemaking

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Presentation to Navajo
Uranium Contamination
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Overview

- EPA regulatory requirements for operating uranium mill tailings (Subpart W)
- Status update on Subpart W activities
- Outreach/Communications



EPA Regulatory Requirements for Operating Uranium Mill Tailings (Clean Air Act)

- 40 CFR 61 Subpart W requirements apply to facilities licensed to manage uranium byproduct materials during and following the processing of uranium ores
- Limit on number/size of impoundments
 - Phased Disposal – lined impoundments no more than 40 acres, no more than two in operation at any time
 - Continuous Disposal – tailings are dewatered and immediately disposed, no more than 10 acres uncovered at any time



EPA Regulatory Requirements for Uranium Operations (Clean Air Act)

Subpart W Requirements (continued)

- Radon emission standard of 20 pCi/m²/sec -- annual reporting requirements, notification in advance of testing
- The radon emission standard is for existing sources only (existing before 12/15/89)
- See <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/neshaps/subpartw/index.html> for more information

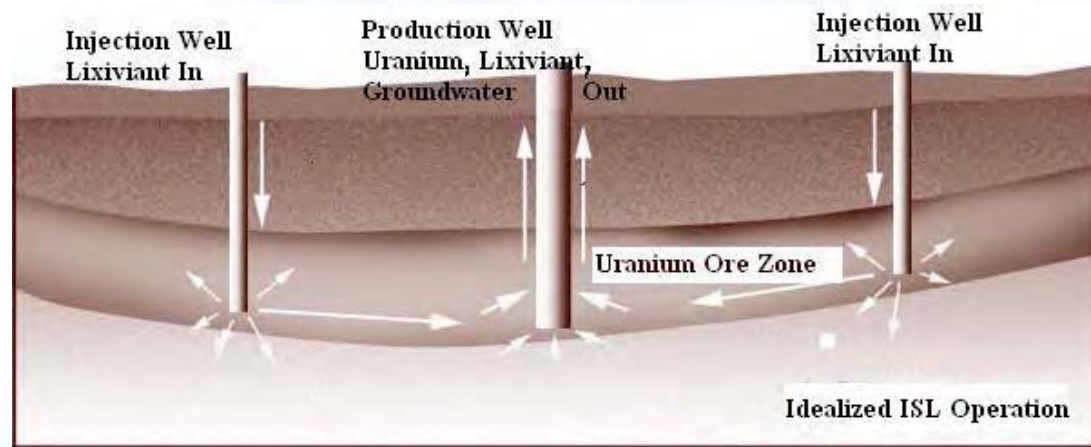


Uranium Recovery Methods

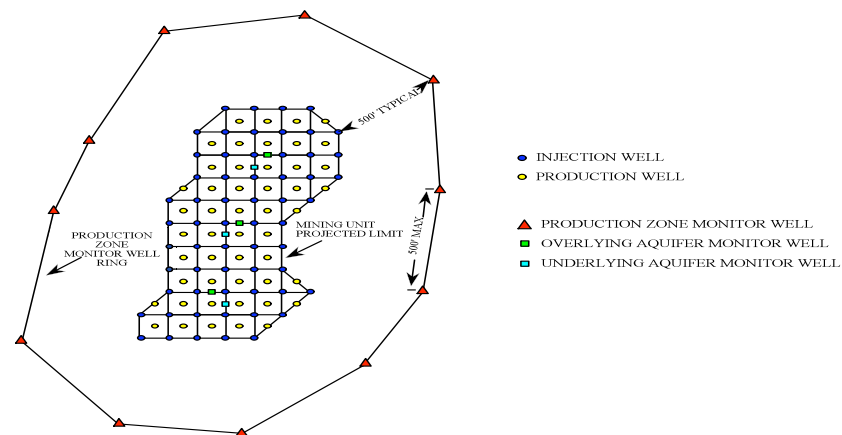
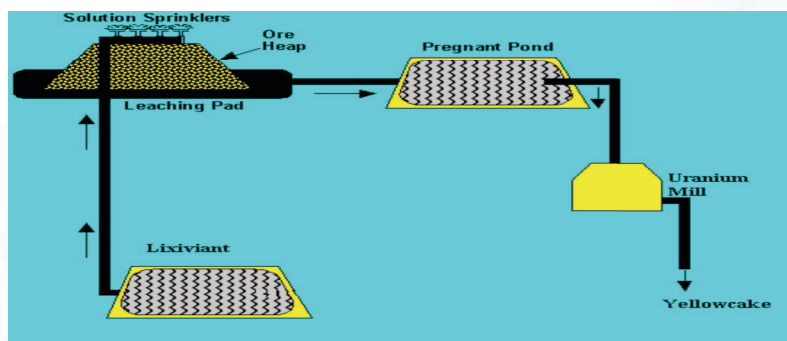
Conventional methods – Surface mill



Unconventional methods-- In Situ Leaching (ISL)



Unconventional methods-- Heap leaching



Uranium Mill Tailings In-Situ Leach Impoundments



Uranium Recovery Facility Applications/Restarts/Expansions

- Total applications already received (8/2009) by NRC – 8
- Total new applications expected – 17
- Total restart/expansion applications – 9

- Wyoming – 15
- New Mexico – 4
- Nebraska - 4
- South Dakota – 1
- Arizona – 1
- Nevada – 1 (?)



Status Update on Subpart W Activities



Status of Subpart W Review Activities

- Per Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, EPA is obligated to review/revise Subpart W
- A workgroup has been established
 - Members from across the Agency
 - Represent ORIA, OGC, ORD, OSWER, OECA, OPEI, OW, Regions 6, 7, 8 and 10



Status of Subpart W Review Activities

- We are conducting historical research on the risk assessment work originally done in support of the 1989 standard
- We have begun a survey of existing technologies
- Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance has sent information request letters to numerous uranium recovery facilities
- Answers better inform the workgroup of the universe of facilities, and the types of uranium recovery processes that exist
- We have also requested that ISL facilities provide radon flux data from their evaporation ponds



Communications Plan

- EPA is committed to maintaining an open and transparent rulemaking process
- Objectives:
 - Inform stakeholders of potential changes in EPA's Subpart W requirements
 - Give stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback
- Audiences:
 - Tribes
 - States
 - Offices/Regions within EPA
 - Other Federal Agencies: NRC, DOE, BLM, others
 - Mining companies



Communications Plan

- Strategies:
 - Develop clear, compelling messages and materials to explain the potential amendments to Subpart W
 - Educate stakeholders by using communications tools to provide easy-access to information
 - Work with stakeholder representatives and EPA regional staff to identify additional audiences and methods of dissemination
 - Communicate a timely and consistent message to stakeholders (Industry, Public, Tribes, States, other government agencies)



Outreach

- Holding stakeholder meetings to inform and receive input
 - Canon City, CO – June 2009
 - Rapid City, SD – October 2009
 - Gallup, NM – November 2009
 - Blanding, UT – Spring 2010
- Establishing a dedicated web site to act as an information outlet
- National webinar planned for early 2010
- Establishing quarterly conference calls to answer stakeholder questions



Thank you for your attention

