

Andrews nuke waste site prepares to open
Latest part of landfill will begin taking radioactive material in January
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BY JON VANDERLAAN jvanderlaan@oaoa.com

The radioactive waste disposal facility outside of Andrews, the first of its kind in Texas and one of three in the United States, celebrated its ribbon cutting Thursday.

Rod Baltzer, president of Waste Control Specialists, which operates the lowlevel radioactive waste disposal facility in Andrews County, said he's been with the company since 1998, just three years after it began its involvement in the project.

"It's a tremendous accomplishment," he said of the first facility in the United States that is licensed with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for disposing of the lowlevel radioactive waste.

Regularly, radioactive waste is transported from holding facility to holding facility without actually being disposed, but the Andrews facility will take waste from 36 states around the country.

WCS Vice President Linda Beach said the standards upheld by the facility are much higher than previous radioactive waste disposal facilities.

"Some say we're going to contaminate the Ogallala Aquifer," she said. "Science, technology and logic is not going to sway them because of what they believe."

In fact, she said, the facility is 10 miles away from the aquifer and will never threaten to contaminate the source.

Not only are the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and other agencies constantly checking up on the facility, but several layers of protection in the way of concrete, grout and red bed clay keep radioactive materials from the outside.

The project is also tightly intertwined with the Texas government, which owns the land and will be pulling in tax revenue from in- and out-ofstate companies that dump at the site.

Baltzer said the site will begin taking radioactive material at the commercial landfill in January. It already takes radioactive waste at a federal landfill and takes radioactive byproduct, all on the same site.

State Rep.

Tryon Lewis gives remarks Thursday during the Texas Low Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Facility grand opening in Andrews County.

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