

WCS Waste Disposal Site Officially Opens



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ANDREWS - Officials and employees alike were on-hand to cut the ribbon, opening Waste Control Specialists' Compact Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Facility in Andrews County.

The 75-foot space will now be disposing of the radioactive waste of 36 states, beginning as early as January 2012.

It's now the only licensed commercial facility in the U.S. for disposal of these wastes.

"This is fantastic. It's been a long time coming. I mean, we've been at this for 16 years since we made our initial investment," Waste Control Specialists President, Rod Baltzer, said. "It's been even longer than that with Andrews County. It's been literally decades in the making."

It's also a first for Andrews County, which will receive \$32 million in revenue, as well as several million dollars every year.

"To have a county that's as prominent in the oil production, in particular, across this state, be as forward-looking toward nuclear energy and nuclear issues is quite advanced," U.S. Congressman, Mike Conaway, said.

But NewsWest 9 was also taken down into the site to find out how health and environmental hazards will be prevented.

One of the major environmental risks listed in the WCS Contractor Orientation Training Packet is the dust that blows off the dry radioactive waste, but WCS

officials and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality inspectors told NewsWest 9 the risk isn't a problem.

TCEQ inspectors told NewsWest 9 the requirements that states must meet before they can dispose of the waste will help make it safer.

They said all waste will arrive in sealed concrete canisters, and two inspectors will stay on-site to monitor the disposal, the same two that have been on-site since construction began this past January.

WCS officials said the site's isolation also prevents contamination.

"Our nearest neighbor's two-and-a-half miles away," Waste Control Specialists Vice President, Linda Beach, said. "I do not see that we would ever have any contamination that would ever get outside of this immediate area."

NewsWest 9 also followed up with those against the disposal we interviewed in the past.

Officials with Promote Andrews said the organization has dissolved and they are not pursuing any more action against them.

However, the organization Public Citizen's Texas Director, Tom Smith, told NewsWest 9 on Thursday they will begin a series of workshops and hearings across the state to make sure the waste is being disposed of safely.

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