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RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

1745 Chris Court  
Deerfield, Illinois 60015-2079  
USA

Telephone: 847-374-0490 Fax: 847-374-0491  
E-mail: [bdiamond@mcs.com](mailto:bdiamond@mcs.com)

Meeting Paper



**Disposal of NORM-Contaminated Oil  
Field Wastes in Salt Caverns –  
Legal, Economic and Risk Issues**

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*by*

**John Veil  
Karen Smith  
David Tomasko  
Deborah Elcock  
Gus Williams  
Deborah Blunt**

**Argonne National Laboratory  
955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 6000  
Washington, DC  
USA**

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## **Disposal of NORM-Contaminated Oil Field Wastes in Salt Caverns - Legality, Technical Feasibility, Economics, and Risk**

John A. Veil, Karen P. Smith, David Tomasko, Deborah Elcock,  
Deborah Blunt, and Gus P. Williams  
Argonne National Laboratory

### **Abstract**

Some types of oil and gas production and processing wastes contain naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM). If NORM is present at concentrations above regulatory levels in oil field waste, the waste requires special disposal practices. The existing disposal options for wastes containing NORM are limited and costly. This paper evaluates the legality, technical feasibility, economics, and human health risk of disposing of NORM-contaminated oil field wastes in salt caverns. Cavern disposal of NORM waste is technically feasible and poses a very low human health risk. From a legal perspective, there are no “fatal flaws” that would prevent a state regulatory agency from approving cavern disposal of NORM. On the basis of the costs charged by caverns currently used for disposal of nonhazardous oil field waste (NOW), NORM waste disposal caverns could be cost competitive with existing NORM waste disposal methods when regulatory agencies approve the practice.

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