

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2304

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Transferring the low-level radioactive waste site use permit program from the department of ecology to the department of health.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Hunt and Moscoso; by request of Department of Health and Department of Ecology.

House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs
House Committee on Ways & Means
Senate Committee on Environment

Background:

Low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) is waste material that contains radioactive nuclides emitting primarily beta or gamma radiation, or both, in concentrations or quantities that exceed standards for unrestricted release but does not include waste containing more than 100 nanocuries of transuranic contaminants per gram of material, spent nuclear fuel, or material that is classified as either high-level radioactive waste or waste that is unsuited for disposal by near-surface burial under federal regulations. It is generated in a variety of ways, by entities such as hospitals, research facilities, and universities and may also include clothing and gloves from nuclear facilities.

The commercial LLRW disposal facility is located near the center of the Hanford Site on approximately 100 acres of federal land leased to the State of Washington. The site has been in operation since 1965 and is the only site in the state accepting commercial LLRW. It is operated by US Ecology Washington, Inc.

The Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Ecology (Department) share regulatory oversight of the commercial LLRW facility. The DOH licenses the facility and ensures that the commercial disposal facility complies with applicable state and federal regulations and license requirements. It also inspects shipments of LLRW, approves disposal of waste into trenches, and inspects the premises.

The Department issues site use permits for generators, packagers, and brokers using the commercial LLRW disposal facility to dispose of LLRW. Approximately 400 site use permits are issued each year. The cost of a permit varies, depending primarily on volume.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2010 following the Governor's directive to consolidate agency functions, the DOH and the Department entered into an interagency agreement allowing the DOH to review site use permit applications and make recommendations to the Department. The Department continues to issue the permits, however, as directed by statute.

Summary:

Authority to issue site use permits is transferred from the Department to the DOH. Permits issued by the Department remain valid until the first expiration date that occurs after July 1, 2012. Statutory changes are made to reflect the transfer, with the DOH charged with the responsibilities and authority held heretofore by the Department.

A change is made in the section pertaining to the authority of the Department Director to clarify that the lease from the federal government to the state covers 115, and not 1,000, acres lying within the Hanford Site.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	2
Senate	49	0

Effective: July 1, 2012