

Beishan Granite as a Viable Host Rock for Geological Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Waste

Mitchell Flores*

Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Rutgers University Newark, New Jersey, USA

DESCRIPTION

Geological disposal of High-Level Radioactive Waste (HLRW) is an important concern in contemporary nuclear waste management. The choice of a suitable host rock plays a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term safety and containment of these hazardous materials. Among the various geological formations under consideration, Beishan Granite has emerged as an optimizing tool for the safe disposal of HLRW. This article delves into the geological and physical properties of Beishan Granite and explores why it is deemed suitable for the containment of high-level radioactive waste.

Geological setting of Beishan Granite

Beishan Granite is predominantly located in the Beishan region of northwestern China. This granite belongs to the Proterozoic era and is characterized by its stable geological conditions, low permeability, and favorable mechanical strength. These inherent geological features make Beishan Granite an attractive option for hosting HLRW repositories.

Crystalline structure and composition: Beishan Granite exhibits a coarse-grained crystalline structure, primarily composed of minerals such as quartz, feldspar, and mica. This composition contributes to its excellent mechanical strength, allowing it to withstand the pressure exerted by the surrounding rocks and provide a robust barrier against the escape of radioactive contaminants.

Low permeability: The low permeability of Beishan Granite is a key factor that enhances its suitability for HLRW disposal. The tight grain structure of the granite minimizes the potential for water infiltration, reducing the risk of leaching and migration of radionuclides. This low permeability is crucial for maintaining the isolation and containment of high-level radioactive waste over extended periods.

Thermal conductivity: The thermal conductivity of Beishan Granite is another advantageous property in the context of geological disposal. The granite's ability to conduct heat

efficiently helps in dissipating the heat generated by radioactive decay, preventing the temperature within the repository from reaching levels that could compromise the integrity of the containment structures.

Radiation resistance: Beishan Granite has demonstrated a high resistance to the effects of ionizing radiation. This property is essential for maintaining the structural stability of the host rock in the presence of high levels of radioactivity. The granite's ability to withstand radiation-induced alterations ensures the long-term integrity of the geological repository.

Seismic stability: The Beishan region experiences low to moderate seismic activity, and Beishan Granite has proven to be resilient in the face of such geological events. The stable tectonic environment contributes to the long-term safety of HLRW repositories hosted in Beishan Granite, minimizing the risk of structural damage or breaches in containment.

Site selection and safety assessments: The selection of a disposal site is a comprehensive process that involves rigorous safety assessments. In the case of Beishan Granite, extensive geological surveys and safety analyses have been conducted to evaluate its suitability. These assessments consider factors such as hydrogeology, seismicity, and the overall geological stability of the region.

Beishan Granite emerges as a scientifically sound and viable option for the geological disposal of high-level radioactive waste. Its combination of low permeability, thermal conductivity, radiation resistance, and seismic stability positions it as a reliable host rock capable of ensuring the long-term safety and containment of hazardous materials. As nuclear waste management continues to be a global priority, the selection of appropriate host rocks like Beishan Granite represents most important step toward mitigating the environmental and health risks associated with high-level radioactive waste disposal. Ongoing research and monitoring will further enhance our understanding of the geological and physical properties of Beishan Granite, contributing to the development of robust and sustainable solutions for the management of nuclear waste.

Correspondence to: Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Rutgers University Newark, New Jersey, USA, E-mail: flores.mitchgeo6@gmail.com

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