



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

JUL 02 2010

Mr. Manuel Bettencourt, Chairperson
SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Dear Mr. Bettencourt:

SUBJECT: Response to Recommendation 270, Increase Loading of Excess Plutonium (Your Letter to Craig, 6/3/2010)

The subject recommendation from the Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board (SRS CAB) has been received and reviewed by the Department of Energy (DOE). I understand the recommendation and provide the following specific responses to the three parts of the recommendation:

1. Increase plutonium (Pu) loading to $2,500 \text{ g/m}^3$ as set forth in DOE's February 4, 2010 directive to the liquid waste contractor, and pursue additional loading to the maximum extent safe and practicable. If DOE continues to pursue the 897 g/m^3 loading, please provide the CAB with an explanation of the technical, legal, and practical reasons for maintaining that level.

Response: We appreciate the SRS CAB's support of the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) and its interest in fissile loading of DWPF canisters. Although the fissile loading level for canisters produced at the DWPF presently remains unchanged (at up to 897 g/m^3), the Department will continue to study the issue with a view toward safe and expeditious waste processing in the DWPF.

2. Explain to the CAB why DOE's risk management and communication systems failed to assure that the 897 g/m^3 figure was revised to a correct figure in the revision to the Yucca Mountain application dated February 19, 2009 so as to eliminate the previously-identified Plan Risk No. 243.

Response: The 897 g/m^3 glass fissile level was reflected in documents supporting the Department's license application for a geological repository for spent nuclear fuel and high level waste at Yucca Mountain based on information available to the Department.


3. Assure that any future DOE license application filed with NRC or other governmental authority for any geological repository accurately reflects EM's WAPS [limit] of 2500 g/m^3 (or such other higher loading as may be justified by EM evaluations) or, if DOE's license application for Yucca Mountain is pursued, assure that an amendment to the application for such higher loading level(s) be pursued diligently and quickly.

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Response: The Department has decided to terminate the program for a geologic repository for disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high level waste at Yucca Mountain and has appointed the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future to develop alternative storage and disposal approaches and provide recommendations to the Department by March 2012. DOE will consider your concerns in developing the most appropriate approach to safely manage, store and disposition high level waste and spent nuclear fuel.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your recommendation on this very important topic. We look forward to working with the SRS CAB as the challenge of the disposal of defense high level waste is resolved. If you have any questions, please contact me or Jean Ridley of my staff at (803) 208-6075.

Sincerely,



Jack R. Craig
Acting Manager

WDPD-10-65

cc: J. Ortaldo, CAB WMC
Melissa Nielson, EM-42, DOE-HQ
Catherine Brennan, EM-42, DOE-HQ
Randall Kaltreider, EM-33, DOE-HQ
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency-Region 4
Albert Frazier, Georgia Department of Natural Resources