

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 8, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: R. F. Warther, M. T. Sautman
SUBJ: RFETS Activity Report for Week Ending August 8, 1997

Roger Zavadoski was on site this week to review ventilation systems in Buildings 371, 707 and 779. Some issues related to B371 were identified that will require further review by the Board Staff and will be discussed as part of the B371 BIO comment process.

Solutions. The Readiness Assessment (RA) for draining the high-level solution tanks in B771 and transferring the solutions to B371 commenced this week. Excessive simulation has been a consistent problem for the B371 solution transfer dry run. The dry run was conducted using a different glovebox in a different room with no actual bag-ins or solution transfers because the actual location for conducting this work is in an airborne room. Essentially, SSOC operators read the procedure aloud, stood next to a glovebox and verbally explained to the RA team what they would do. Fortunately, the RFFO Oversight Team and later the K-H RA team determined that this dry run was unacceptable and will task SSOC to repeat the procedure and demonstrate the process.

During the B371 dry run, ALARA practices were not used for handling a solution bottle reading 437 mrem/hr on contact. The RCT did not wear a lead apron as did the operators, spent a long time surveying the bottle for contamination during unpacking and packing operations, and was near the bottle for over a half hour. An operator also stored the bottle on the floor right next to his leg and below his lead apron for twenty minutes while they discussed how to respond to an upset condition. The RA will continue through next week.

Infinity Room Decontamination. SSOC has started using hot water (135°F at the nozzle) in the Hydro Laser to remove contamination in B371 room 3549 that normal temperature water left behind. They are also starting to use 1 N nitric acid on hot spots. The site reps will report on the effectiveness of these actions in the future.

RFFO Reduction in Force. Jesse Roberson met with her staff to discuss RIFs at RFFO. Nearly 300 personnel are assigned to the RFFO. No specific numbers were provided during this brief. However, RFFO did issue information regarding early retirement and buy out programs. According to RFFO personnel, about 40 - 45 people requested information. About 25 people are "serious."

Secretary Peña's Visit. Secretary Peña visited Denver to meet with the public and the Lt. Governor. Following this meeting, he gave a speech in downtown Denver and announced that the Department of Energy is designating Rocky Flats as the first, large Accelerated Closure Pilot Site. The full text of his speech is attached.

EOC Manning. The EOC was manned again on Monday for the same reason as on 7/24. A lightning strike caused an increase in the circuit to ground potential, which initiated a crit alarm. The response actually went fairly well. However, the following issues with this recurring problem have been identified and are being addressed by K-H:

1. Surge protection capability must be improved.
2. The general site risk increases when the building is evacuated. It takes nearly four hours to fully man the building following an evacuation for a crit alarm.
3. The reliability or minimum detectability of other instrumentation (e.g., smoke detectors, D/P instrumentation, etc.) following an electrical transient may be reduced. Ajit Gwal is reviewing standards (e.g., IEEE, nuclear industry) to determine what actions, if any are required.
4. None of the Wackenhut guards are qualified to wear Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. As a result, they cannot enter the building to verify security until the RCTs declare the building safe from potential airborne conditions.

cc: Board Members

Attachment

**A DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY COMMITMENT:
ACCELERATED CLEAN UP AT ROCKY FLATS**

August 7, 1997

Thank you Gail for those kind words of introduction. It's a great pleasure to be back in Colorado among old friends and colleagues. I'd like to thank Sam Cassidy and the Board of the Jefferson Economic Council, as well as Commissioners John Stone, Pat Holloway, and Michelle Lawrence for organizing this event.

I am announcing today that the Department of Energy is designating Rocky Flats as our first, large Accelerated Closure Pilot Site. This announcement underscores President Clinton's commitment to protecting the environment and reflects my personal commitment to cleaning up Rocky Flats as quickly as possible. And it is an acknowledgment of the excellent work that already has been done at Rocky upon which we will build.

I would also like to note that the Fernald and Mound sites in Ohio will be designated as Accelerated Closure Pilot Sites. All of these actions support the recent discussion draft on accelerating cleanup that was provided to Colorado residents two months ago.

By this announcement I am directing that a team be formed that will examine two specific issues:

1. Ways to incentivize more cleanup work from Kaiser-Hill. Rocky Flats and Kaiser-Hill have already shown they can get a great deal out of existing budget dollars. There are almost three years left in the contract with Kaiser-Hill. I expect to see enormous progress toward closure before that term expires. And I want the DOE Field Office to more effectively manage the contract. We have a planning baseline that calls for the site to be closed by the year 2010. Now we will evaluate an even more aggressive target for site closure: 2006.

Our ability to meet this target will depend on a number of factors. For example, if Kaiser-Hill can find ways to do work faster, cheaper and safer, they should be able to apply the savings to do even more cleanup work. This year alone, Rocky was able to squeeze \$40 million more cleanup out of the contract using innovative contracting strategies. I want to see more of this type of progress.

2. Elimination of bureaucratic morass. This team will look at red tape, unnecessary rules, outdated management systems and other obstacles to getting the job done. This team will be directed to look everywhere to find ways to do business better.

I would like to make three points about this announcement. First, I want to explain what is needed to ensure the success of today's designation of Rocky Flats as an Accelerated Closure Pilot. Second, I want to tell you why we selected Rocky Flats as a Pilot Site. And, finally, I'll review how this work being done at Rocky Flats could serve as a model for cleanup at other sites.

Accelerated Closure Pilot Site

It doesn't seem that long ago that I was Denver's Mayor and we learned about some of the problems at Rocky Flats. I recall how frustrating it was getting information out of the Department of Energy as we tried to understand the scope of the problem. This was a trying time for all of us. I also recall my work on the Long Term Utilization Study when I argued that we should have started to clean up Rocky back in the early 80's.

Fortunately, a great deal has changed in the past 10 years. We know we have a difficult task ahead of us to complete the cleanup at Rocky -- and the Department of Energy certainly doesn't have all of the answers. But we now have an open and constant dialogue and relationship with many local citizens. If there is a lesson we've learned, it is this: the DOE needs community involvement in the cleanup effort.

And we still need your help. Although we can see an end in sight, accelerated closure will not be easy. It will depend heavily on two factors: funding stability, and available sites to store the nuclear materials currently located at Rocky Flats.

Let's discuss funding stability. Your Congressional delegation and local elected officials deserve a great deal of credit for supporting the Department's efforts to identify more funds for Rocky Flats. But overall funding stability for the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management is essential to continued progress at Rocky Flats and other cleanup sites. I will continue to work with Congress and others to ensure that stable funding is achieved.

As you know, President Clinton has achieved what many thought was impossible -- a balanced

budget agreement. By 2002, our Federal government budget will show a surplus. This is good news for Rocky Flats and for the nation. A stable Federal budget will enable us to establish funding priorities and stay on target. Funding for the Department's environmental cleanup efforts must remain a high priority.

Now let me turn to the subject of where the waste will be stored. This is key to the accelerated cleanup effort and the future vitality of the region. Storing materials indefinitely at Rocky Flats is simply not an option. We have other options for storage of Rocky Flats' waste. And progress has been made in this effort.

Most notable are the ongoing shipments of plutonium pits from Rocky Flats to our Pantex facility in Texas. These shipments remove dangerous materials from the site and demonstrate that it can be done safely, effectively, and with the cooperation of other states. As we work to ship materials to other sites, we will be drawing upon the lessons learned from this successful action.

Shipping plutonium pits is part of the Department's plan to complete the removal of plutonium from Rocky Flats no later than 2004. This is 10 years ahead of the schedule in the Rocky Flats Clean Up Agreement signed in 1996.

Most of the waste at Rocky Flats, unlike plutonium, has low levels of radioactivity. We are already moving aggressively to ship this waste. On average about three truckloads a day are now leaving Rocky. But the cleanup of Rocky Flats will also generate new quantities of waste. And we will have to ship this waste even faster.

If we are to accelerate the closure of Rocky Flats, we need to guarantee that there will be places to receive the waste. I am working to ensure that sites are available throughout the entire Rocky Flats closure process.

Opening the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico is a priority. We are working with EPA to ensure that we comply with all of their waste disposal standards. And we will make every effort to keep to our schedule of opening the facility in May of 1998.

Why Rocky Flats

Rocky Flats deserves to be singled out as an Accelerated Closure Pilot because of the precedent-setting efforts that have been made here in performance-based contracting and regulatory

reinvention.

Rocky Flats was the first major Department of Energy site to have a performance-based contract that shares the responsibilities and rewards of the cleanup effort with the prime contractor and subcontractors. In other words, everyone is held accountable. The contract also contains specific performance measures that encourage accelerated closure. This contract with Kaiser-Hill has produced more results in the last two years than in the previous five. Let me share some of these successes:

- * All plutonium and uranium have been removed from Vault 152 in Building 776, considered the most vulnerable storage location at Rocky;
- * Next month, we will begin draining highly contaminated plutonium solutions from tanks in Building 771, identified in 1994 as the most dangerous building in America;
- * In July, 75% of containerized waste from the plutonium buildings had been removed;
- * By the end of August, we will have completed nearly 50 shipments of nuclear materials off-site; and,
- * Early next year Rocky Flats will install a state-of-the-art Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging device that places plutonium in “50 year cans.” This is the final step needed to support safe and secure plutonium storage at other sites.

As for regulatory agreements, Rocky Flats could serve as a model for other sites. Rocky Flats signed a first-of-its-kind, barrier busting regulatory agreement one year ago with local, state and federal agencies. These regulatory agreements have led to expedited approvals and close cooperation among regulatory agencies, the community, and the Department of Energy.

We will, of course, continue to work with you and other local citizens to reduce the toll that inevitable job reductions will have on Rocky Flats employees. We have formed partnerships with the local community, unions, and businesses to soften the impact that job losses might have.

In this regard, let me take a moment to thank Bob Dyer, Sam Cassidy, DeAnne Butterfield and the entire Board of the Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative. Their leadership has already resulted in the

creation of 500 jobs. The work you are doing to strengthen the local manufacturing base, to assist startup companies, and to support technology transfer efforts is crucial to a smooth transition at Rocky Flats.

The Benefits

The 1995 Baseline Environmental Management Report estimated that cleanup of Rocky Flats would take more than 50 years and \$36 billion. Understandably, many local leaders and citizens did not embrace these estimates. You were right to object and we listened.

The Accelerated Closure Pilot I am announcing today sets the goal of accomplishing the same job in only 10 years and at a cost of \$7 billion. That, in and of itself, is sufficient reason to conduct the pilot. But let me give you two more reasons.

First, the experiences and lessons we learn from this pilot will be adopted at our other large sites. If, compared to the 1995 estimate, we can save \$29 billion at Rocky Flats and shave 40 years off the time it takes to do the job, we must be doing something right. I want the Department of Energy to learn from this experience and help other communities accomplish the same thing.

Second, the government has a responsibility to be a good neighbor and a responsible steward of public lands. The work done at Rocky Flats helped win the Cold War; but as President Franklin Roosevelt said in a 1935 message to Congress, “Men and nature must work hand in hand. The throwing out of balance of resources of nature throws out of balance the lives of men.”

We are working to restore that delicate balance. Ten years from now -- when the last building is taken down and the day the last waste truck has left the site -- we will mark a magnificent new beginning for land that once was a “no-man’s” land.

I want to thank everyone in this room for contributing to that effort and I ask your support as we work to complete the job.