

May 19, 2000

Dr. Bernard L. Meyers
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Bechtel BWXT Idaho, LLC
P.O. Box 1625, MS 3898
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83415

Subject: Enforcement Letter (NTS-ID--BBWI-TRA-1999-0001)

Dear Dr. Meyers:

This letter refers to the Department of Energy's (DOE) evaluation of the facts and circumstances concerning issues related to the contamination of personnel while performing a hot cell exhaust system filter replacement. This incident occurred on July 21, 1999, at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory's (INEEL) Test Reactor Area Hot Cell Facility (TRA-632). Building TRA-632 is used by International Isotopes Idaho, Inc. (I4) for the preparation of irradiated materials for commercial distribution. During February 29 through March 2, 2000, DOE conducted an investigation to determine what, if any, noncompliances with applicable nuclear safety regulations may have been associated with this incident. A copy of the Investigation Summary Report is enclosed.

DOE recognizes that Bechtel BWXT Idaho (BBWI), LLC, assumed responsibility as the Management and Operations (M&O) contractor for activities at INEEL on October 1, 1999, and therefore the circumstances that led to the event were not BBWI's responsibility. DOE's investigation identified that BBWI, upon assumption of its M&O responsibilities, conducted a review of a variety of outstanding radiological control and quality assurance events and issues. That review resulted in the above incident being reported into DOE's Noncompliance Tracking System (NTS) on November 1, 1999, and the generation of corrective actions.

The corrective actions included in NTS Report NTS-ID--BBWI-TRA-1999-0001, notably the revision to Standard STD-101, "Integrated Work Control Processes," to ensure that radiation safety review comments are integrated into appropriate work control documents; and the emphasis of radiological control technician responsibilities to oversee radiological work, when implemented, should resolve the fundamental deficiencies associated with the filter replacement event. DOE also views the event's NTS reporting and the report's corrective actions as noteworthy and in keeping with DOE's expectations for the identification, reporting, and correction of nuclear safety noncompliances.

The investigation further revealed that implementation of the Interface Agreement between the previous M&O contractor and I4 was less than adequate in that the previous M&O management's roles and responsibilities were neither well defined nor well understood. Those deficiencies included oversight breakdowns that sometimes resulted in insufficient incorporation of applicable safety requirements into work control documents pertinent to I4's operations. It is DOE's expectation that this interface be effectively managed. DOE thus expects BBWI to effectively implement, and periodically review for effectiveness, the Interface Agreement to ensure that all necessary work controls and safety programs are sufficiently in place at TRA-632.

DOE has concluded that violations of 10 CFR 830, "Nuclear Safety Management," did occur as identified by the July 21, 1999, personnel contaminations at TRA-632. However, an enforcement action involving BBWI is unwarranted. BBWI's proactive efforts to identify, report, and correct previous performance deficiencies are furthermore commendable. DOE, though, will monitor your progress in the implementation of the corrective actions described in NTS report NTS-ID--BBWI-TRA-1999-0001.

Please contact Mr. Steven Zobel of my staff at (301) 903-2615 should you have any questions or comments regarding this correspondence.

Sincerely,

R. Keith Christopher
Director
Office of Enforcement and Investigation

Enclosure:
Investigation Summary Report
cc's w/o enclosure

cc: B. Costner, S-1
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S. Cary, EH-1
K. Christopher, EH-10
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