

September 5, 2007

Dr. April Gil, Acting Director
Regulatory Authority Office
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
1551 Hillshire Drive
North Las Vegas, NV 89134-6321

SUBJECT: THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION WORK ACTIVITY DURING
A QUARTERLY TUNNEL ENTRY

Dear Dr. Gil:

In support of preparations for review of a license application for the potential high-level waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff has been following the Exploratory Studies Facility (ESF) tunnel curtailment, work plan development, and quarterly tunnel entries. As part of this effort, NRC staff has been discussing plans with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) about NRC performing several activities in the ESF during a scheduled DOE quarterly inspection.

Proposed NRC staff activities revolve around observations related to potential thermal seepage and spalling of rock fragments from the drift ceiling in the Alcove 5 Drift-Scale Heater Test. The activities the NRC staff would like to perform during a scheduled DOE tunnel entry are described in greater detail in the Enclosure, which was structured as a work plan, based on early discussions with DOE.

The NRC staff is concerned about the possibility of information or features of interest being obscured with time, or being unavailable for review. The planned DOE tunnel access provides an opportunity for these aforementioned seepage and spalling observations.

NRC requests DOE approval to conduct NRC staff activities in the ESF. The NRC staff will continue to coordinate with DOE to ensure that these activities are completed in a safe manner. Please contact James Rubenstone, at 301-492-3176, or e-mail: jxr5@nrc.gov, if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jack R. Davis, Deputy Director
Technical Review Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste Repository Safety
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Enclosure:
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory
Commission Work Activity Plan During
a Quarterly Tunnel Entry

cc: See attached list.

Letter to A. Gil from J. Davis dated: September 5, 2007

cc:

A. Kalt, Churchill County, NV	A. Elzeftawy, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe
R. Massey, Churchill/Lander County, NV	J. Treichel, Nuclear Waste Task Force
I. Navis, Clark County, NV	W. Briggs, Ross, Dixon & Bell
E. von Tiesenhausen, Clark County, NV	R. Murray, DOE/OCRWM
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T. Story, NV Congressional Delegation	M. Mason, BSC
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P. Thompson, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe

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G. Hernandez, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe

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