



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION IV

611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-8064

December 17, 1996

Brigadier General Laws
Commander
Department of the Army
ATTN: STEWS-CG
White Sands Missile Range
White Sands, New Mexico 88002-5048

SUBJECT: NRC INSPECTION REPORT 030-09345/96-01

Dear General Laws:

On October 3, 1996, the NRC completed a special inspection of your Gamma Range Facility. The enclosed report presents the results of that inspection.

The inspection was initiated in response to notification provided by White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) staff that a cobalt-60 source was identified as leaking during a leak test performed on April 24, 1996. WSMR had previously provided written notification of another leaking source of the same model, strength, and approximate age by letter dated June 23, 1994. In addition, cobalt-60 sources of the same model and strength were previously found to be leaking in 1982 and 1983. The inspection included examination of the Gamma Range Facility, the irradiator and source transfer system, and source carriers used in the irradiator, all of which are unique. The inspectors also reviewed information relating to the irradiator design and previous analyses of the use of sealed sources in the system completed by WSMR and its contractor. Site visits were conducted on April 30 through May 1, and on August 28-29, 1996.

Although no violations of NRC regulations or the license were identified, significant concerns were identified regarding the continued use of sealed sources (both cesium-137 and cobalt-60), with source carriers supplied by WSMR, in the Gamma Range Facility. These concerns were described in a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) issued by the NRC on October 24, 1996. Because actions deemed necessary to address concerns identified during this inspection are specified in the CAL, no response to this letter is necessary. Our evaluation of your response to the CAL will be communicated by separate correspondence.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

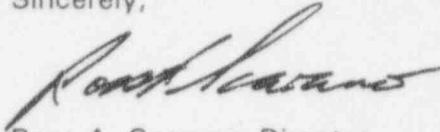
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Department of the Army
White Sands Missile Range

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Should you have any questions concerning the enclosed report, please contact Mr. Robert Brown at (817) 860-8130 or Ms. Linda Howell at (817) 860-8213.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ross A. Scarano", written in a cursive style.

Ross A. Scarano, Director
Division of Nuclear Materials Safety

Docket: 030-09345
License: 30-02405-10

Enclosure:
NRC Inspection Report 030-09345/96-01

cc w/enclosure:
New Mexico Radiation Control Program Director

Department of the Army
White Sands Missile Range

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