



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
REGION I  
475 ALLENDALE ROAD  
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1415

March 31, 2003

Docket No. 03034751

License No. 31-02892-06

John J. Donnellan, Jr.  
Director (00)  
VA New York Harbor Healthcare System  
800 Poly Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11209

SUBJECT: INSPECTION 03034751/2001010, VA NEW YORK HARBOR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, ST. ALBANS EXTENDED CARE CENTER, QUEENS, NEW YORK

Dear Mr. Donnellan:

On July 17 - 18, 2001, Todd Jackson, of this office conducted a site safety inspection at the St. Albans Extended Care Center, Queens, New York of activities authorized by the above listed NRC license. The inspection was an examination of your final survey and decommissioning activities as they relate to radiation safety and to compliance with the Commission's regulations and the license conditions. The inspection consisted of observations by the inspector, interviews with personnel, and a selected examination of representative site records. On March 13, 2003, the NRC received the Final Remedial Action Report for the St. Albans facility which presented final status survey data on the facility. This inspection also examined the data associated with this report. The findings of the inspection were discussed with Mr. James Mallen of your organization at the conclusion of the inspection. The enclosed report presents the results of this inspection.

Within the scope of this inspection, no violations were identified. Based on the findings in this report, you may request termination of License No. 31-02892-06. An Environmental Assessment and notification in the Federal Register will be performed following receipt of your request.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790, a copy of this letter will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room and will be accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm.html>. No reply to this letter is required.

Your cooperation with us is appreciated.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by Ronald R. Bellamy***

Ronald R. Bellamy, Chief  
Decommissioning and Laboratory Branch  
Division of Nuclear Materials Safety

Enclosure:  
Inspection Report No. 03034751/2001010

J. Donnellan  
VA New York Harbor Healthcare System

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cc:

James Mallen, Chief, Engineering Service (138)

John Mazzulla, Staff Assistant (00M)

David Brouwer, ACE, NY District

State of New York

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U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
REGION I

INSPECTION REPORT

Inspection No. 03034751/2001010  
Docket No. 03034751  
License No. 31-02892-06  
Licensee: New York Harbor Healthcare System  
Address: Brooklyn Campus  
800 Poly Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11209  
Locations Inspected: St. Albans Extended Care Center, Queens, New York  
Inspection Dates: July 17 - 18, 2001  
Date Followup  
Information Received: March 13, 2003

Original signed by:TJ Jackson 3/31/03

Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_  
Todd J. Jackson, CHP  
Health Physicist date

Original signed by:JR Wray 3/31/03

Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_  
John R. Wray, CHP  
Health Physicist date

Original signed by: RR Bellamy 3/31/03

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ronald R. Bellamy, Chief  
Decommissioning and Laboratory Branch  
Division of Nuclear Materials Safety date

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

New York Harbor Healthcare System  
NRC Inspection Report No. 03034751/2001010

The St. Albans Extended Care Center, located in Queens, NY, is owned and operated by the Brooklyn Medical Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs' New York Harbor Health Care System. The facility was formerly owned and operated as a hospital by the U.S. Navy. A spill of <sup>90</sup>Sr occurred in the Navy hospital in the 1960s. The Navy decontaminated the affected rooms, and the Atomic Energy Commission terminated the Navy's radioactive materials license in December 1973. In the early 1990s, the facility was reexamined as part of a review of formerly licensed facilities by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and found to still be contaminated. The Navy surveyed the facility and sealed the contaminated areas. Decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) work began in September 2000. The NRC inspected the facilities on July 17-18, 2001, and reviewed additional information contained in the NRC Confirmatory Survey and the licensee's Final Status Survey. The NRC Confirmatory Survey in February 2001 indicated the facilities had been substantially prepared for conduct of a final site radiation survey. Work was observed to be performed safely and in compliance with NRC regulations. No violations were identified. The licensee provided comprehensive final survey data on March 13, 2003, to demonstrate that the contaminated facilities at the St. Albans Extended Care Center have been successfully decontaminated and may be released for unrestricted use.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

### **Background**

The St. Albans Extended Care Center (ECC), owned and operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Brooklyn, incorporates 15 buildings on 55 acres located at 179<sup>th</sup> Street and Linden Boulevard in Queens, NY. During the 1960s, the facility was owned and operated as a hospital by the US Navy, and it was during that period that a spill of radioactive material occurred. The affected area of the St. Albans ECC consists of the former nuclear medicine laboratory and associated rooms in the basement of one building, identified as Building 90. A Decommissioning Plan was developed for the VA by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps). The Corps is responsible for performing the decommissioning under the Formerly Utilized Defense Sites program. The licensee's objective for the decommissioning project, as stated in the decommissioning plan, is to decontaminate and remediate the affected areas of Building 90 sufficiently to enable unrestricted use, while ensuring exposures to occupational workers and the public during the decommissioning are maintained as low as reasonably achievable.

In August 1998, the NRC issued a license to the VA for decontamination and decommissioning of the St. Albans facility. During 1999, the Corps conducted a characterization survey of the affected areas and developed a decommissioning plan. The survey confirmed the presence of <sup>90</sup>Sr contamination and traces of <sup>3</sup>H contamination in portions of the facility, and was used as the basis for development of the decommissioning plan. In December 1999, the Corps proposed derived concentration guideline levels (DCGLs) to be used as radiological cleanup criteria for decommissioning and NRC termination of the license. DCGLs were incorporated into Revision 1 to the license covering St. Albans, dated October 10, 2000.

### **Project Status**

Decommissioning work began in September 2000. NRC inspections described in this report were conducted at St. Albans on July 17 and 18, 2001. Decommissioning and decontamination work was complete at the time of this inspection, with the final radiation and contamination survey in progress. Since the previous inspection report (03034751/2000-001), the NRC received the report of the confirmatory survey performed during February 2001. In addition, the agency performing decommissioning work for the licensee (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) planned to submit to the NRC the final status survey for St. Albans during the latter part of 2001. The Corps experienced several factors which delayed the submittal, and the Final Status Survey Report was received by the NRC on March 8, 2002. Finally, an additional report of survey results and data (dated January, 2003) was received on March 13, 2003.

## **I. Facilities and Equipment**

### **a. Inspection Scope**

The inspector reviewed the status and condition of the facilities, and of the equipment being used to conduct the final status survey.

b. Observations and Findings

The inspector observed that significant remediation work had been completed since the previous inspection visit on February 28, 2001. Much of the final radiation survey had also been completed, and the inspector observed preparations for the survey of the interior of the wastewater discharge pipe originating in the wall above the former location of the waste storage tank in the ejector pit room. The instrument to be used for surveying the pipe interior included a gas proportional beta-sensitive detector designed specifically for making measurements within piping, and was an appropriate instrument for the survey.

The licensee had removed contaminated materials from the locations identified by the NRC confirmatory survey. These areas had been decontaminated and were available for the inspector to survey. Results are discussed in section III below. All areas appeared ready for final survey, with all remediation work completed. No waste or construction materials remained in the facility as of the conclusion of the inspection visit on July 18, 2001.

c. Conclusions

All physical work to decontaminate and decommission the affected facilities at St. Albans appeared to have been completed. The remaining final survey work was in progress and was being conducted appropriately.

## **II. Radioactive Material Control**

a. Inspection Scope

The inspector observed the controls implemented to prevent the spread of radioactive contamination and to prevent unauthorized access to the areas undergoing decommissioning.

b. Observations and Findings

The licensee maintained locked doors to control unauthorized access to the affected rooms at St. Albans, and the inspector noted that access was effectively controlled. Although remediation work had been completed, the final status survey in progress had yet to confirm that areas were free of contamination. Additionally, the licensee contractor performing the contamination surveys was controlling access to and movement within the affected rooms to assure that decontaminated areas would not be recontaminated if there was remaining contamination somewhere within the facility.

c. Conclusions

The inspector noted that licensee controls were adequate to prevent the removal or spread of contamination outside of the affected areas, and to prevent access or potential exposure to contamination by unauthorized personnel.

**III. Radiation Surveys**

a. Inspection Scope

The inspector reviewed the status of the final site radiation survey and observed survey activities in progress.

b. Observations and Findings

This inspection was conducted during part of the final site survey at St. Albans. Prior to the inspection, the NRC conducted an independent confirmatory survey, which had been scheduled to occur after most decommissioning activities had been completed. The NRC confirmatory survey was conducted on February 26-28, 2001, and the report from the NRC contractor who performed the survey was received by the NRC in August 2001<sup>1</sup>. In the report, the NRC contractor's results indicated that remaining contamination levels, with the exception of four discrete locations, were less than the site-specific <sup>90</sup>Sr DCGLs of 8700 dpm/100cm<sup>2</sup> on surfaces or 11 pCi/g in soil. No radionuclides other than <sup>90</sup>Sr were identified by the NRC confirmatory survey. The surveyors collected samples at soil locations where count rates were noticeably higher than surrounding areas for laboratory analysis. Measurement results at these four locations were as follows:

**Confirmatory Survey Results Greater than the St. Albans DCGLs**

Location	Surface (dpm/100cm <sup>2</sup> )	Soil (pCi/g)
Survey Unit 001-High Level Lab	Spot #1: 11,000 Spot #2: 12,000 (both spots small, <100cm <sup>2</sup> )	37.8
Survey Unit 001-Counting Room	Not Applicable	16.9
Survey Unit 005-TV storage room	17,000 (small spot, <100cm <sup>2</sup> )	Not Applicable

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<sup>1</sup>Confirmatory Survey of the St. Albans Veterans Administration Extended Care Center, Queens, NY, Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, August 23, 2001. ADAMS accession number ML012420385.

Survey Unit 005-Hall	22,000 (small spot, <100cm <sup>2</sup> )	Not Applicable
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Subsequent to identification of the four specific locations with contamination greater than the DCGLs, the Corps performed additional remediation activities to decontaminate these spots, removing any detectable contamination. The inspector measured contamination levels at the same four locations during this inspection, on July 17-18, 2001. Measured surface contamination levels at all four locations had been reduced by the decontamination work, and all were less than the site-specific DCGLs. The inspector also detected no radioactivity greater than the surrounding areas at the places where the elevated soil concentrations had been sampled. The Corps personnel spread soil from these two locations onto a sheet of plastic to facilitate the inspector's measurements and no increase in contamination was detected, indicating no residual soil contamination greater than the DCGL.

Additionally, at the time of the NRC confirmatory survey, the TV storage room also contained many old TV sets in storage, preventing access to much of the room. The Corps subsequently removed the TV sets and performed a complete survey of the room. Results of this survey work were transmitted to the NRC in a report dated January, 2003. This report provided data indicating that the TV sets had been surveyed upon removal, and the room areas previously covered by TV sets had also been surveyed. The data demonstrated that all measurements showed no contamination, and were therefore less than the DCGLs.

The inspector's confirmatory measurements, in combination with the results of the February 2001 NRC confirmatory survey and the Corps survey of the TV room, therefore indicated no remaining locations within the facility with measurements that exceeded the site-specific DCGLs. Satisfactory remediation of the facilities was confirmed by the licensee's Final Status Survey, submitted to the NRC March 6, 2002<sup>2</sup>, and supplemented by an additional survey report dated January, 2003.<sup>3</sup>

c. Conclusions

All measurements in the final site status survey and subsequent surveys demonstrated that contaminations levels were less than the DCGLs, indicating that the inspected facilities had been successfully remediated sufficiently to release the facilities for

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<sup>2</sup>Final Report: Final Status Survey of St. Albans VA Medical Hospital, Queens C02NY0763, Department of the Army, New York District, Corps of Engineers, March 6, 2002. ADAMS accession number ML020730606.

<sup>3</sup>Final Remedial Action Report for Decontamination and Decommissioning, St. Albans Veterans Administration Extended Care Facility, Queens, New York, transmitted under letter signed by David Brouwer, Project Manager, Formerly Used Defense Site Program Office, New York District, Corps of Engineers, March 13, 2003. ADAMS accession number ML030830087

unrestricted use.

#### **IV. Radioactive Waste Management**

a. Inspection Scope

The inspector toured the facilities and observed the areas formerly used to store radioactive waste.

b. Observations and Findings

All waste generated during decontamination of the St. Albans facility had been removed from the premises in preparation for the final contamination survey. The Corps had records reflecting the appropriate shipping and disposal of the contaminated waste.

c. Conclusions

No remaining waste was observed by the inspector on July 18, 2001. The facilities were ready for final status survey.

#### **V. Exit Meeting**

The inspector discussed the status of the inspection with licensee personnel during the site visit in July 2001, and discussed the results and status with Mr. James Mallen following the site visit, while awaiting the final status survey report. The evaluation of additional materials submitted by the Corps on March 13, 2003, was also discussed by telephone with Mr. Mallen on March 17, 2003.

## **PARTIAL LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED**

James Mallen, Chief, Engineering, Brooklyn VA  
Ernest Monteleone, Engineering Supervisor, St. Albans ECC VA  
Luz Spann-Labato, Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Hans Honerlah, Health Physicist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Marc Bianco, Safety Engineer, Stone & Webster  
Shewin Bian, Project Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Hank Siegrist, Health Physicist, Cabrera Services