

April 16, 2003

Ms. Donna L. Wichers,  
General Manager  
COGEMA Mining, Incorporated  
P.O. Box 730  
Mills, WY 82644

SUBJECT: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF NEW RADIATION SAFETY OFFICER  
(DOCKET # 40-8502) SUA-1341

Dear Ms. Wichers:

By letter dated March 10, 2003, COGEMA Mining, Inc. (COGEMA) provided information on the new employee intended to replace the current Radiation Safety Officer (RSO), John Vaslin, for the Irigaray and Christensen Ranch *In Situ* Leach Uranium Projects, on April 1, 2003. The letter listed specialized training and knowledge for this employee, Mr. Tom Nicholson, that did not meet the recommendations in Regulatory Guide 3.31 for an RSO, as required by License Condition 9.12 in SUA-1341. His one year of experience remediating uranium mill tailings was in 1987. Although the letter indicated that the new employee was being trained for 3 weeks by the current RSO, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff determined that the required 4 weeks of specialized classroom training in health physics applicable to uranium recovery and a thorough knowledge of the proper use and application of all health physics equipment used in the uranium recovery facility, were not demonstrated.

During a phone conversation with John Vaslin on March 20, 2003, he stated that the new employee would take an RSO class in the fall and that several NRC-approved RSOs are available to Mr. Nicholson for consultation. After discussion with NRC Region IV staff, I have determined that, considering the minimal activity at the sites, Mr. Nicholson is approved as the RSO, conditional to his consulting a qualified RSO as needed, and passing the RSO class. Of course, the yellowcake dryer cannot be operated without a qualified RSO on site.

If you have any questions, contact Elaine Brummett, the NRC project manager for the Irigaray and Christensen Ranch facilities, at (301) 415-6606 or by e-mail to [esb@nrc.gov](mailto:esb@nrc.gov).

D. Wichers

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In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter will be available electronically from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

Sincerely,

***/RA/***

Susan M. Frant, Chief  
Fuel Cycle Facilities Branch  
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety  
and Safeguards  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

Docket No: 40-8502  
SUA-1341

cc: G. Mooney, WDEQ - District III

D. Wichers

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Sincerely,

**/RA/**

Susan M. Frant, Chief  
Fuel Cycle Facilities Branch  
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety  
and Safeguards  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
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Docket No: 40-8502  
SUA-1341

cc: G. Mooney, WDEQ - District III

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