



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

October 9, 1998

J. Russell Dyer, Project Manager
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

Dear Mr. Dyer:

In the August 19, 1998, management meeting, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was briefed on U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) efforts to document decisions made in the course of licensing. In this presentation, your staff outlined the process the Project has implemented for this purpose. DOE has standardized this process in the form of a new procedure (Documenting Decisions YAP-30.60) and issued the procedure for implementation. In the past, NRC has emphasized the importance of ensuring that licensing decisions are documented in a defensible and traceable manner for the regulator and other interested parties. Therefore, I have asked my staff to review the new procedure.

Based on our review, we believe this procedure will help ensure that licensing decisions are documented in a defensible and traceable manner. This procedure requires that key decision elements be developed, in the form of a decision package, and considered in the decision process. These elements include: 1) a statement of the decision under consideration; 2) alternatives considered; 3) criteria used to evaluate alternatives; 4) references to related material; and 5) proposed recommendation. The decision is made only after management has reviewed and signed the decision package. A computerized database has also been developed to provide electronic archiving of Decision Packages providing the traceability of actions related to making and documenting decisions. This database also includes a DOE Records Center accession number where a hard copy form of the completed decision package is maintained.

In our view, DOE has developed a sound process for documenting potential licensing decisions. It is our understanding however, that while this process has been implemented at the Project level, it has yet to be fully implemented at the OCRWM level. Therefore, we encourage DOE to fully implement this process in accord with this procedure. I would also like to see a demonstration of your Decision Database when the process is fully implemented.

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If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact me at (301) 415-7437, or Michael Bell of my staff at (301) 415-7286.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Bell, Chief
Performance Assessment and HLW
Integration Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc: S. Morris, YMSCO
C. Newbury, YMSCO
W. Dixon YMSCO
R. Loux, State of Nevada
L. Barrett, DOE/Wash, DC
S. Hanauer, DOE/Wash, DC
S. Rousso, DOE/Wash, DC
R. Clark, YMPO
D. Bechtel, Clark County, NV
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Sincerely,

John T. Greeves, Director
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
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