

July 21, 1995

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Dr. Stephan J. Brocoun  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Yucca Mountain Project Office  
P.O. Box 98606  
Las Vegas, NV 89193-8608

SUBJECT: USE OF EXPERT ELICITATION IN THE HIGH-LEVEL WASTE PROGRAM  
AND STATUS OF SITE CHARACTERIZATION ANALYSIS COMMENT NO. 3

Dear Dr. Brocoun:

On June 1, 1995, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) provided the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff with a proposed resolution to NRC's 1989 Site Characterization Analysis (SCA) Comment No. 3, including its "Principles and Guidelines for [the] Formal Use of Expert Judgment by the Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Project," Revision 0, dated May 22, 1995. The staff is not prepared, at this time, to respond definitively to the substance of the proposed resolution. However, the staff believes that it is important to provide timely and effective feedback to DOE on this issue.

To that end, the staff is transmitting the transcripts of two briefings it recently conducted on the use of expert elicitation in the high-level waste (HLW) program. Specifically, transcripts of the staff briefings on June 21 and 22, 1995, respectively, for the Commission and the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste on the status of its activities to develop guidance in this area are enclosed. These transcripts contain the staff's current views on both the use of expert elicitation in the HLW program and its preliminary reaction to DOE's "Principles and Guidelines" document. DOE may wish to consider these views during the conduct of current and future expert elicitations. Moreover, the staff believes that it would be prudent to defer formal comment on DOE's "Principles and Guidelines" document and DOE's recommended resolution of SCA Comment No. 3 until after a proposed NRC/DOE technical exchange on expert elicitation, tentatively scheduled for September 18, 1995.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Janet P. Kotra of my staff. She may be reached at 301/415-6674.

Sincerely,

15/  
John H. Austin, Chief  
Performance Assessment and  
Hydrology Branch  
Division of Waste Management  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety  
and Safeguards

Enclosures (2): As stated

cc: See Next Page

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