



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

October 9, 1996

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. John H. Austin, Chief
Performance Assessment and HLW Integration Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards

FROM: William L. Belke, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative for Quality Assurance and Engineered Systems *Belke*

Chad J. Glenn, Sr. On-Site Licensing Representative for Natural Systems and Total Systems *Chad Glenn*

SUBJECT: U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION ON-SITE
LICENSING REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT ON YUCCA
MOUNTAIN PROJECT FOR SEPTEMBER 1996

The purpose of this letter is to transmit the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission On-Site Representative's (OR's) report for the period of September 1-30, 1996.

The principal purpose of the OR reports is to alert NRC staff, managers and contractors to information on U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) programs for site characterization, repository design, performance assessment, and environmental studies that may be of use in fulfilling NRC's role during pre-licensing consultation. The principal focus of this and future OR reports will be on DOE's programs for the Exploratory Studies Facility, (ESF) surface-based testing, performance assessment, data management systems and environmental studies. Relevant information includes new technical data, DOE's plans and schedules, and the status of activities to pursue site suitability and ESF development. In addition to communication of this information, any potential licensing concerns, or opinions raised in this report represent the views of the ORs and not that of NRC headquarters' staff.

There appears to be a notable increase in the number and substance of deficiencies being identified during the conduct of the DOE internal QA audits. This increase has been especially noticeable with the recent audits of the U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Sandia National Laboratories. This trend could be indicative of ineffective oversight or budgetary constraints. The ORs recommend that DOE consider reviewing the current system of implementing the QA program effort and develop alternative solutions for improvement before major issues develop and render data and information unacceptable for the licensing process.

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The ORs continue to monitor ESF and surface-based testing activities. In the ESF, activities continue to be focused on the excavation of the Thermal Test Alcove and the Northern Ghost Dance Fault Alcove. An important surface-based tracer test at the C-Hole complex is expected to start in October 1996. Section 5.0 of this report identifies several recently completed documents that may have a bearing on NRC Key Technical Issues.

If you have any questions on this report or its enclosures, please call William L. Belke or Chad J. Glenn on (702) 388-6125.

cc w/enclosures as stated:

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