

FEB 18 1994

Mr. Dwight E. Shelor, Associate Director
for Systems and Compliance
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Shelor:

SUBJECT: OBSERVATION OF DESIGN REVIEW OF EXPLORATORY STUDIES FACILITY
PACKAGE 2B

Enclosed for your information is the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Design Review Observation Report 94-01 of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, 90 percent Technical Review of Package 2B, "North Ramp Studies, Analyses and Specifications," for the Exploratory Studies Facility, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 5-7, 1994. The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, State of Nevada, and affected units of local government sent representatives to observe this review. A list of the attendees is provided as Attachment 1 to the enclosure.

For this review, the NRC staff provided both verbal and written comments on the programmatic and technical aspects of the design, design control process, Determination of Importance Evaluation, and conduct of the design review. The NRC staff also provided comments related to Package 2B based on the sample of the preliminary predecisional design package reviewed during the time available. The NRC staff's verbal comments were provided to the designated Civilian Radioactive Waste Management System, Management and Operating Contractor (M&O) observer point of contact individual on January 6, 1994, and the complete written comments were provided on January 7, 1994. Observation of the 90 percent design review does not constitute an in-depth design review or imply NRC acceptance of the design.

In accordance with a preestablished schedule for this design review, a comment resolution meeting was held on January 24, 1994, at which DOE provided responses to comments identified on the appropriate comment forms provided for this design review. This meeting was attended by an NRC On-Site Licensing Representative. The NRC staff also requested responses to its verbal comments to better understand the design/design review process and preclude any potential misunderstandings in the future.

Based on its observations of the 90 percent design review and the comments from the design reviewers and other observers, the NRC staff observers question the effectiveness and adequacy of the design interface among the design disciplines and the DOE/M&O contractors during development of the design and prior to the 90 percent design review.

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The revised design review process, which started with Package 2B, is a definite improvement over the previous process. Reviewers and observers had two weeks to review the design documents and provide comments. Observers also had the opportunity to discuss the review comments with reviewers and watch the design review process. Many minor and editorial comments and other misunderstandings were easily resolved. However, there was insufficient time for the reviewers and observers to discuss their comments with the actual designers.

The NRC staff plans to observe future design reviews and technical review activities, as appropriate, to ensure that the above comments have been considered in the process. If you have any questions, please contact Bill Belke at (301) 504-2445.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by Kenneth R. Hooks

for Joseph J. Holonich, Director
Repository Licensing and Quality
Assurance Project Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste
Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

- Enclosure: As stated *on the shelf*
cc: R. Loux, State of Nevada
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J. Meder, Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau
R. Nelson, YMPO
M. Murphy, Nye County, NV
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