



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

August 17, 1995

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Mr. Robert Loux, Director
Agency for Nuclear Projects
Nuclear Waste Project Office
State of Nevada
Carson City, Nevada 89710

SUBJECT: VISIT BY MR. CHARLES GASKIN TO NEVADA TEST SITE

Dear Mr. Loux:

I am responding to your July 31, 1995, letter regarding the June 16, 1995, visit by Mr. Charles Gaskin, of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards (NMSS), Division of Fuel Cycle Safety and Safeguards. This visit was identified in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission On-Site Representatives' (ORs) report for June 1995. I believe the information provided below will help clarify the purpose of the visit.

The activities undertaken by Mr. Gaskin only related to Yucca Mountain and therefore were covered by Appendix 7 of the site-specific agreement. In particular, Mr. Gaskin has been and continues to work on security and safeguards concerns associated with the high-level waste repository program. In this area he is involved with: 1) preparing NUREG-1323, "License Application Review Plan for a Geologic Repository for Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste," and 2) assisting in the on-going rulemaking on physical security at spent fuel storage and disposal facilities. In addition, Mr. Gaskin maintains cognizance of the pending legislation that could lead to an application for NRC licensed storage at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). . . Because of the potential Congressional activity and as a matter of convenience, Mr. Gaskin used his visit as an opportunity to visit locations at the NTS that the ORs believed to be under consideration by Congress. No one at DOE designated particular areas as potential sites. The locations visited were simply "best guesses" of the ORs. The focus of the OR report on Mr. Gaskin's interest in potential future activities at NTS was simply their attempt to explain how this visit differed from other first-time visits to NTS and Yucca Mountain by NMSS staff members.

Your letter also raised concerns about an item in the OR report which referred to an agenda item in the regular ORs meeting with Yucca Mountain Project Manager, Wesley Barnes. The ORs have told me that this item referred to the ORs informing Mr. Barnes that they would be bringing another NRC staff member onto the NTS for a tour similar to that provided to most first-time NRC staff visitors to Yucca Mountain. In that regard, the only DOE staff with whom Mr. Gaskin met were those involved in conducting the mandatory tunnel safety training required for entering the Exploratory Studies Facility and informal discussions with DOE staff at the ESF pad.

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R. Loux

Finally, Mr. Gaskin did not prepare a trip report nor develop, circulate or gather written information for others on the NRC staff. Therefore, the only materials associated with Mr. Gaskin's visit to NTS are contained in the OR report which you reference in your letter. Furthermore, I do regret the oversight of the staff's providing a courtesy "heads-up" call to your staff informing them that this visit would take place.

Besides Mr. Gaskin's visit, you are probably aware that the ORs recently took Dr. William Travers, Director of the Spent Fuel Project Office (SFPO), on a tour similar to Mr. Gaskin's. The SFPO carries out the NRC staff's responsibilities regarding transportation and interim storage of spent fuel. During his visit, Dr. Travers was interested in both the currently authorized site characterization activities, including the overall environment in which a multiple purpose canister would be emplaced, and other potential storage and handling activities at NTS.

I trust this letter responds to all of your concerns. If you need to contact me, I can be reached at 301 415-7238.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Joseph J. Holonich, Chief
High-Level Waste and Uranium
Recovery Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

cc: See next page

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