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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Distribution

FROM: Susan Zimmerman *SWZ*  
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DATE: December 4, 1989

SUBJECT: State Observations on the DOE QA Audit of Los Alamos  
National Laboratory

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On November 13-17, 1989, the DOE, through its contractor SAIC, performed a quality assurance audit of Los Alamos National Laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico. This memorandum is to relate the observations made by me and the State's two technical observers regarding the audit process and the Los Alamos QA program.

The Audit Process

There appeared to be two audits running concurrently instead of one; one programmatic and one technical. The lack of integration of the two sides was readily apparent and was detrimental to the audit. Some of the technical auditors appeared more interested in finishing their part of the audit quickly and leaving. The audit schedule seemed geared toward this end. The practice of having a specified time limit to perform an audit of a technical or programmatic activity or, if the audit is not finished in that time frame, to have to return to the subject two days later to finish was not conducive to performing an adequate audit. The programmatic portion of the audit recovered adequately after a rocky start, although things were very rushed at the end to finish some parts and the audit did have to be continued after the holidays. Portions of the technical audit were totally inadequate. Some of the technical auditors asked minimal questions and even answered some of the questions for the LANL staff being audited. In multiple cases, there was no tracing of data from published accounts back to the original raw data, no reviews of lab notebooks, etc. One technical auditor had even prepared audit questions for a study plan that had not been written yet. Incidents

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such as these bring into question how prepared the technical auditors were for this audit.

#### The Los Alamos QA Program

Unfortunately, the Los Alamos QA program does not appear to have made much progress from last year's audit. Given that more than 20 findings were discovered during the audit, even though approximately seven to ten were corrected during the audit, it was apparent that LANL still has a ways to go to have adequate QA program controls in place for their activities. Procedures appeared inadequate to control the activities that they covered. Procedures were issued with missing pages and no one discovered it until this audit. How often were these procedures used? How thorough was the review of these procedures? There was no objective evidence to support the technical adequacy of technical reviews performed. How adequate were these reviews? Why did the audit and surveillance programs of both LANL and DOE not find these problems? How adequate are both the review process and the audit/surveillance/corrective action process at LANL? With these types of questions brought up by the audit, it is little wonder that the audit team made the findings they did.

There still appears to be a basic lack of understanding of QA by the LANL and LATA QA staff. The statement by one of the LATA staff that technical reviewers of documents were not part of the project and therefore did not have to be trained to the QA program is a prime indication of this lack.

Distribution

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