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BB/NRC OBS AUD REP NO.90-7

DEC 14 1990

Mr. Dwight D. Shelor, Acting Associate Director
for Systems and Compliance
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy, RW 30
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Shelor:

SUBJECT: OBSERVATION AUDIT OF SANDIA NATIONAL LABORATORIES (SNL)

This letter transmits the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Observation Audit Report No. 90-7 for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)/Yucca Mountain Project Office (YMPO) Quality Assurance (QA) Audit No. 90-04 of SNL conducted at Albuquerque, New Mexico from August 20-24, 1990. The NRC staff evaluated the DOE/YMPO QA audit to gain confidence that DOE and SNL are properly implementing the requirements of their QA programs. The NRC staff based its evaluation of the audit process and the SNL QA program on direct observations of the auditors, discussions with the audit team, and reviews of the pertinent audit information (e.g., audit plan, checklists, and SNL documents).

The NRC staff has determined that DOE/YMPO Audit No. 90-04 of SNL was useful and effective for the limited amount of work being conducted under the QA program. The audit was conducted in a professional manner and the programmatic and technical portions of the audit were generally effective and well integrated. The audit team was well qualified in the QA and technical disciplines, and their assignments and checklist items were adequately described in the audit plan.

The NRC staff agrees with the preliminary DOE/YMPO audit team findings that SNL generally has an adequate QA program for the areas that were audited, with the exception that certain criteria remain indeterminate due to limited implementation or limited effectiveness of implementation. QA and technical personnel were trained and qualified. The results of Audit 90-04 support the conclusion of our October 24, 1990 letter (Linehan to Shelor) that the SNL QA program is acceptable for implementation of new site characterization activities for the Yucca Mountain Project (YMP).

Two Observations were noted by the NRC staff. The first was that the audit checklist did not contain provisions to verify whether allegations concerning inadequate quality were being resolved in accordance with YMP Administrative Procedure AP-5.8Q. The second Observation concerned retention of surveillance checklists as quality assurance records. These Observations are of a generic YMP nature and do not impact our conclusions concerning DOE Audit 90-04 of SNL.

DOE should monitor the SNL program to ensure that future implementation is carried out in an adequate manner. The NRC staff expects to participate in this monitoring as observers and may perform its own independent audit at a later date to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the SNL QA program.

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A written response to this letter and the Observations noted in Section 5.10(a) of the enclosed report is required. If you have any questions, please call William Belke on (301) 492-0445 or FTS 492-0445.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

John J. Linehan, Director
Repository Licensing and Quality
Assurance Project Directorate
Division of High-Level Waste Management

Enclosure: As stated

- cc: C. Gertz, DOE/NV
- S. Bradhurst, Nye County, NV
- M. Baughman, Lincoln County, NV
- D. Bechtel, Clark County, NV
- D. Weigel, GAO
- P. Niedzielski-Echner, Nye County, NV

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*See previous concurrence

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A written response to this letter and the observations noted in Section 5.10(a) of the enclosed report is required. If you have any questions, please call William Belke on (301) 492-0445 or FTS 492-0445.

Sincerely,

John J. Linehan, Director
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