



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION IV
611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-4005**

February 8, 2006

Department of the Army
White Sands Missile Range
ATTN: Douglas McDonald
Radiation Safety Officer
Applied Technology, Test and Simulation
CSTE-DTC-WS-DT-AP
White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico 88002-5048

SUBJECT: LICENSE AMENDMENT REQUIREMENT

This letter is in reference to the February 2, 2006, telephone conversation between you, Mr. Jack Whitten, Chief, Nuclear Materials Licensing Branch, and Mr. Bob Brown, Nuclear Materials Inspection Branch. In our conversation, we discussed the need for White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) to update its July 24, 2000, application to reflect the irradiator equipment configuration planned for the Gamma Range Facility. As we understand from conversations with our inspectors, Mr. Robert Brown and Mr. James Thompson, you plan to modify and upgrade the panoramic irradiator at the Gamma Range Facility. During a recent visit by Messrs. Brown and Thompson, you outlined your plans to remove the internal electro-mechanical latch and switch that come into physical contact with an exposed sealed source in the irradiator head. Like WSMR, we are also concerned that these internal switches have caused source hang ups and jams. Consequently, we understand WSMR's desire to remove these internal switches. To remedy this problem of hung up or jammed sealed sources, WSMR has indicated to our inspectors its desire to replace the internal switch and latch with an externally mounted electro-mechanical magnetic switch that does not come in contact with the sealed source. This modification, WSMR believes, would reduce or eliminate the problem of jammed or hung up sources in the irradiator located in the Gamma Range Facility. The purpose of either type of switch is to provide an indication that the sealed source is exposed in the irradiator head.

Supplement E (including diagrams) of the July 24, 2000, application should be amended to address the changes planned for the irradiator. Since you are also at this time contemplating removing the shock absorber springs in the irradiator head, you should also address this modification in your amendment request. Licensees are expected by the NRC to conduct their programs with meticulous attention to detail and maintain a high standard of compliance. We are concerned that serious consequences could result should a failure occur of an unreviewed safety system (sealed source location indicator) designed to replace the approved system described in the July 24, 2000, application. WSMR is responsible for ensuring a high level of safety when operating. As a part of maintaining its radiation safety program, WSMR is responsible for maintaining its NRC license current. To be in compliance with NRC licensing requirements, and prior to modifying the irradiators identified in License No. 30-20405-10, we request that you amend your license to address planned updates or changes.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the undersigned at (817) 860-8197 or Mr. Bob Brown at (817) 860-8130.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.390 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter, its enclosures, and your response (if any) will be made available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the NRC's document system (ADAMS), accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/Adams.html>. To the extent possible, your response should not include any personal privacy, proprietary, or safeguards information so that it can be made available to the public without redaction.

Thank you for your cooperation in resolving this issue.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jack E. Whitten, Chief
Nuclear Materials Licensing Branch

Docket: 030-09345
License: 30-02405-10

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Document Name: s:\dnms\!nmlb!\jew\white sands letter30-02405-10.wpd Final r:_dnms

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