



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION IV
612 EAST LAMAR BLVD, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-4125

November 13, 2009

Department of the Air Force
ATTN: CRAIG L. ADAMS, Lt Col, USAF, BSC
Chief, Radiation Programs
USAF Radioisotope Committee
AF Medical Support Agency (AFMSA/SG3PB)
1400 Key Blvd., Nash Bldg, Suite 400
Rosslyn, VA 22209-1554

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL FOR DEPLETED URANIUM (DU) COUNTERWEIGHTS AND
STRONTIUM-90 at McCLELLAN AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA

Dear Lt. Col. Adams,

The NRC recently learned from a site visit at the Naval Air Station Alameda that the Navy has identified several instances where the storage of DU counterweights contributed to the contamination of storage rooms. The DU counterweights exhibited oxidation and corrosion which appeared to have contributed to contaminated dust in and around the storage rooms. The regulation under 10 CFR 40.13, "Unimportant quantities of source material" states in part that any person is exempt from the regulations for storage and handling of DU counterweights in connection with installation or removal of such counterweights, provided there is no chemical, physical or metallurgical treatment or processing other than repair or restoration of any plating or other covering.

The NRC understands that entities are exempt from licensing when handling and removing DU counterweights. However, based on recent experiences, the NRC would like to know whether the Air Force has knowledge of specific rooms at McClellan AFB which were used for the storage of DU counterweights and whether any of these rooms also exhibited potential contamination from the storage of DU counterweights. Does the Air Force have any experience in identifying potential contamination in any such storage room(s) that would be beneficial to the agency?

Secondly, the NRC is aware that the Navy modified its program in the early 1960's from using radium-226 to using strontium-90 for its luminescent properties on equipment and markers. Did the Air Force also make a transition to using strontium-90 for its luminescent properties? If so, was strontium-90 also evaluated as part of the historical site assessment for McClellan AFB, particularly where radium-226 has been identified in disposal pits?

Please respond to this request within 15 business days. If you need additional time to respond, please submit your request in writing or by email to this office.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.390 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter will be available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel S. Browder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "R" and "B".

Rachel S. Browder, Health Physicist
Nuclear Materials Safety Branch B

Docket: 030-28641
License: 42-23539-01AF

cc:

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