

W M-28
PDR

POOR ORIGINAL

John Dubois, President
Manuelito Chapter
The Havajo Nation
Window Rock, Arizona 86515

Dear Mr. Dubois:

Thank you for providing us with a copy of Manuelito Chapter resolution of July 29, 1979 concerning the United Nuclear Corporation Church Rock tailing embankment failure.

I assure you and members of your Chapter that we are very concerned about the public health implication of this failure. The State of New Mexico requested assistance from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. As a result of the request the NRC is providing the State technical assistance in the following areas:

1. Evaluation of the cause of failure of the embankment;
2. Identification of the critical pathway of radionuclides to humans and the estimated doses as a result of the embankment failure;
3. Development of recommended levels of clean up of contamination which will be protective of public health based upon the pathway analysis;
4. Arranging for the use of the ARMS aircraft (aerial surveillance) to determine the effectiveness of the clean up of contamination;
5. Use of federal laboratories to assist in assaying radioactivity in environmental samples taken by the State of New Mexico and the NRC. This will include mobile facilities of the Church Rock site to expedite the complicated process of radiological analyses.

In addition, the NRC has informed the State of New Mexico and United Nuclear Corporation (UNC) that in accordance with its authority to regulate tailings under the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978, the NRC now has authority over these mill tailings and will review UNC's proposed remedial action related to the breached portion of the tailings embankment as well as the overall stability of the structure.

7911260 200

OFFICE					
SURNAME					
DATE					

POOR ORIGINAL

- 2 -

John Dubois

I promise to see to it that you promptly receive the results of these analyses as soon as they are completed. If you have further questions, please feel free to call Mr. Wayne Kerr (301) 492-7767, our Assistant Director for the Agreement States. For details regarding the actions taken by the State on these matters, we recommend you contact: Dr. Ted Wolff, Chief, Radiation Protection Section, Environmental Improvement Division, P.O. Box 960, Crown Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503.

Sincerely,

(S)
Robert G. Ryan, Director
Office of State Programs

cc: Dr. T. Wolff

Distribution:
JKendig
JLubenau
RRyan R/F
SA R/F
LV Gossick R/F
Gertter - 07143
WDircks, NMSS
SECY 79-2381
FYoung

1391 111