



## Department of Energy

Albuquerque Field Office  
P.O. Box 5400  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87185-5400

APR 06 1993

Mr. John J. Surmeier  
Chief, Uranium Recovery Branch  
Division of Low-Level Waste  
Management & Decommissioning  
Office of Nuclear Materials Safety  
and Safeguards  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Mail Stop 5E-4 OWFN  
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Mr. Surmeier:

This is in response to the Department of Energy (DOE) action item 5 in the February 27, 1992, management meeting letter (and re-iterated as DOE action item 1, second paragraph in the February 16, 1993, management meeting letter). The item calls for the DOE to provide the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) with a copy of the correspondence policy that was developed out-lining procedures to sign and transmit correspondence at lower levels. The NRC will then use this as a model to develop their policy for correspondence and interaction with the DOE.

As mentioned previously, Albuquerque Field Office's (AL) management made a commitment to empower DOE employees by giving them the responsibility and authority needed to meet their customers' needs. This includes the NRC as a customer. Empowerment includes investigating and improving the work processes the employees own, in conjunction with other stakeholders. Enclosed for your information is a copy of a September 18, 1992, AL NEWS article on the subject.

The way the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project Office has implemented this commitment for our Project Site Managers is to include the following language in their Position Descriptions:

"Incumbent is accountable, empowered and authorized to sign most correspondence to the contractors, State and Federal agencies, and local officials (county, city and task forces) unless it pertains to political, sensitive, controversial or policy matters; otherwise, correspondence will be signed by the Engineering and Construction Group Leader, Deputy Project Manager or Project Manager, as appropriate."

The process is working well and is a follow-up to "Process Quality Management and Improvement" training which has been provided to most AL employees. Enclosed is a copy of the training course materials.

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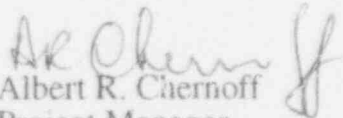
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Mr. John J. Surmeier

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Should you have any questions on any of the above information, please call Clinton Smythe at (505) 845-5659 or me at (505) 845-5762.

Sincerely,

  
Albert R. Chernoff  
Project Manager  
Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action  
Project Office

2 Attachments

cc w/attachment:  
(AL News Article only)

C. Smythe, UMTRA  
F. Bosiljevac, UMTRA  
DOE UMTRA Site Managers

# AL QUALITY CORNER



The AL Quality Corner is a regular feature of the AL News. Updates on AL's Leadership Through Quality effort appear in the Quality Corner each month.

## Empowerment

In June 1990, AL management made a commitment to empower AL employees by giving them the responsibility and authority needed to meet their customer's needs. This included investigating and improving the work processes they own, in conjunction with other stakeholders.

At a recent AL Team Skills workshop, members of the LTQ Council were asked many questions about empowerment. What is it? How much trust? How much risk? How far? How fast? What about accountability? What are we doing about it? The following article by Bill Bankey, LTQS, is a result of these discussions.

Employee empowerment is a hot issue all around the country. Many acknowledge its benefits. Customers get better service because the person who is most knowledgeable can respond promptly to meet their needs and solve problems. Organizations are strengthened as employee's knowledges and skills multiply and as customers are satisfied. Managers have more time to plan and coach. Individuals grow personally and professionally. At its best, empowered individuals take personal responsibility for achieving positive outcomes, learning and growing, and giving more than is required. This kind of empowerment can't be delegated, but those involved benefit from persons who attain it.

But, most organizations are struggling. Pointing fingers blame others for slow and uneven progress. Employee empowerment is emotionally charged because it affects employees personally and on-the-job. Employees and managers share concerns about stepping outside our comfort zone, job security, not trusting our boss or other employees, and just not being ready.

Several things have been done to begin to make empowerment a reality at AL. Senior and middle managers have attended seminars that helped them understand how personal behavior styles and differences affect their own and employee's comfort with empowerment. Similar training will be offered to supervisors and other employees in FY 1993.

Focus groups of employees and managers have discussed their experiences with and concerns about empowerment. They shared their concerns and suggestions with Bruce Twining, AL Manager. The LTQ Council is working on several fronts to deal with these issues.

These efforts will help, but management is not solely responsible for empowerment. Empowered managers can provide the right environment and training, but mutual trust and self-actualized empowerment are also needed. Employees must do their part before true empowerment is a reality throughout AL.