DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Rocky Mountain Laboratories
Hamilton, Montana 59840

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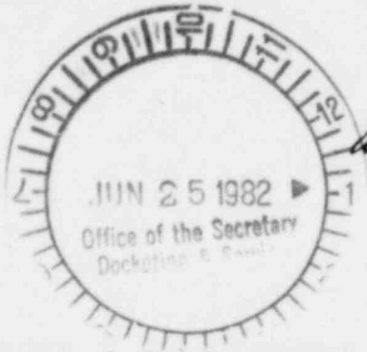

DOCKET NUMBER
PROPOSED RULE PR - Misc Notice
Reg Guide

Secretary of the Commission
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Attn: Docketing and Service Branch

Re: Draft Regulatory Guide and Value/Impact Statement - Qualifications for the Radiation Safety Officer in a Large-Scale Non-Fuel-Cycle Radionuclide Program

Gentlemen:

The Radiation Committee of our laboratory has discussed the Draft Regulatory Guide and Value/Impact Statement - Qualifications for the Radiation Safety Officer in a Large-Scale Non-Fuel-Cycle Radionuclide Program. The committee members have expressed their concern about various aspects of the draft proposal and feel the following comments should be submitted for consideration.

One of the most salient weaknesses in this draft regulatory guide is the ambiguity and broad generality of the definitions and characteristics given for a "large-scale" program. The list of characteristics presented on pp. 5-7 is certainly not unique to a large program. It is quite likely that from 50-90% of these characteristics would apply to small or medium-size programs as defined in the bottom paragraph of p. 2. The definition for a "large" program in the bottom paragraph of p. 4 is especially vague. Who is going to be responsible for evaluating a program by these criteria and determine whether or not a program is large?

If the guidelines and characteristics for a "large program" were strictly applied, it is conceivable that many medium-size programs, with an RSO serving on only a part-time basis, could be classified as large programs and require full-time RSO's with considerable professional training in health physics or radiological health. RSO's have served at this laboratory on a part-time basis during the past 25 years without any serious problems. There has not been any indication from NRC inspections that the qualifications of the RSO's were unacceptable. Have NRC inspections of other licensees raised serious questions about the competency of RSO's?

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Ltd. Ed Hill
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Acknowledged by card. 6/25/82 mdv

The degree of knowledge and proficiency in all the characteristics listed in Appendix A for an individual to satisfactorily serve as a Radiation Safety Officer is dependent on the complexity of the program. Proficiency in all of these areas can be gained by experience and specialized training and is not dependent upon degrees in health physics and/or radiological health. While it is agreed that individuals meeting the criteria in Table 1 will probably possess all the qualifications in Appendix A, it is not felt that the criteria in Table 1 should be hard and fast rules.

These comments are respectfully submitted and reflect our concern about how the proposed regulatory guide will affect the so-called medium-size program where the Radiation Safety Officer is assigned on a part-time basis and may or may not have had formal training in health physics and/or radiological health.

Sincerely yours,

Robert K. Bergman

Robert K. Bergman, Ph.D.
Radiation Safety Officer