



UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE OF REGULATORY OPERATIONS
REGION III
799 ROOSEVELT ROAD
GLEN ELLYN, ILLINOIS 60137

TELEPHONE
(312) 858-2660

January 10, 1974

Memo to Files

DECEMBER 3 & 5 TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH COCHRAN AND TAMPLIN RE: KERR MCGEE

On December 3, 1973, the author received a telephone call from Mr. Tom Cochran who stated he was an attorney employed by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a public law firm. He stated that he had received a letter from the Yougheims (sponsored by the Science Institute of Public Information). He stated that the letter contained or identified problems in connection with the operations at the Kerr-McGee Cimarron Fuel Fabrication Facility. His reason for calling was to obtain information from us which would shed some light on the veracity or the substance of the Yougheims. The author stated that the information could best be provided by staff members in Region III who were directly involved with the Kerr-McGee Inspection Program responsibility and stated that he would gather these people on a conference call and would get back to the caller Mr. Cochran. The following members were assembled and responded to questions that ensued from the second telephone call:

Jim Allan
Bill Fisher
Jack Finn
Jack Hind

When the caller was contacted the second time he informed the author that Dr. Tamplin was also present and had questions concerning the communication from the Youghiems. The first problem identified in this communication was that the Youghiems identified the fact that three or four plutonium leaks had occurred at the facility, and that in connection with the August 18, 1973 leak an employee Billy Ray Owens had received radiation burns and lost his nail and will probably lose his finger. The caller wanted to know if this were infact the case. The staff members stated that they were not aware of this. They reported that they had investigated the August 18, 1973, waste drum leak and that the control and decontamination efforts were conducted appropriately and no other problem had been uncovered in this regard. They stated that they would pursue this matter and would inform the caller of the findings. The second matter brought to the attention of Region III group was the fact that March 7 fire had involved seven workers that were exposed in varying degrees to airborne contamination and that

January 10, 1974

these seven workers were not wearing respirators. They stated that the records available to them indicated that the investigation had not been completed in that no particules size analysis had yet been made and no whole body counting results were available. Mr. Fisher stated that the review of this event had been completed and that the information regarding the cause was infact documented in a report which is located in the Public Document Rooms. The third matter brought to the attention of the Region III staff was a question raised in connection with storing of plutonium nitrate waste offsite. The staff was questioned whether this was permitted by regulation. The caller was challenged about the accuracy of that statement and wanted to know if in fact the communication stated offsite storage. The caller inturn stated that the communication said that the waste was stored outside. The caller was informed that the storage of waste outside of the building in a van was authorized by regulations. The fourth matter involved the communication from Mr. Page to Kerr-McGee in regards to parametric studies relating to the safeguards program. Mr. Hines related that the information was in the Public Document Rooms. The fifth matter involved a question concerning two employees leaving the plant contaminated and going to a cafeteria offsite. Mr. Allan stated that we were aware of that information and that particular incident led to a citation. The communication then involved the discussion on Commission procedures for implementing enforcement actions. The caller noted from the communication that any significant problems were brought to their attention and they wanted to know at what point the Commission would revoke the license of the fuel facility. The author stated that the inspection findings did uncover problems with the plant operations and a special corporate meeting was held recently with executive management representatives of the company and that we obtained assurance that appropriate corrective actions were taken. The author continued with the description of the enforcement actions that were available to the Commission and stated that at this time no revocation of license action was warranted however, the plant operations would be continuously reviewed by the Region and that appropriate action would be taken if future operations were not improved. A question was raised regarding the availability of inspection reports and the safeguards report from Page to Kerr-McGee. The inspector stated that they would check on this and would get back to the callers. The conversation ended with a summary of followup by the author in which he reconfirmed with callers that the following actions would be pursued and communication to the callers would be made: (1) the matter involving Billy Ray Owens alleged radiation burns would be pursued, (2) information would be obtained regarding the availability of reports to the callers, and (3) the procedure for entering the seven persons involved in the plutonium fire in getting them in the plutonium registry. As a miscellaneous bit of information the caller stated that they were going to provide input into the preparation of the environmental statement for the liquid metal fast

January 10, 1974

breeder reactor program. They stated that they were concerned that the problems identified with the Kerr-McGee Plant they were disturbed at what the condition or situation would be when a 100 such plants were in operation.

On December 5, 1973, Mr. Fiorelli and Mr. Allan re-contacted T. Cochran and Dr. Tamplin and provided them with information concerning availability of inspection reports, plutonium nitrate registry, Page's letter to Kerr-McGee dated May 5, 1973, and informed them that Owen's injury was a chemical injury rather than a radiation incident. Both Cochran and Tamplin considered the matters closed at this time, except that they would review the inspection report to see if Kerr-McGee's operation was as bad as they were led to believe by the Yougheims' communication.



Gaston Fiorelli, Chief
Reactor Operations Branch