



June 02, 2020

Ron C. Linton  
Project Manager/Hydrogeologist  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards  
MS T-5A10, 11545 Rockville Pike  
Rockville, MD 20852

**Re: Notice of Deferral of Evaporation Pond 1 Re-Lining due to COVID-19**

Dear Mr. Linton:

As discussed on the call of May 14, 2020, Homestake Mining Company of California (HMC) has elected to defer the EP-1 re-lining project to a later date, possibly Spring 2021, due to the ongoing and highly unpredictable threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The reasons for the deferral are as follows:

- The water balance considerations surrounding the EP-1 relining project are sensitive to timeline disruptions.
  - Should no storage capacity exist due to delays in the EP-1 relining project the RO plant would be shut down and hydraulic containment lost.
- The State of New Mexico and neighboring states have enacted varying types of travel, lodging, and dining restrictions of undeterminable duration.
  - The loosening or tightening of restrictions are tied to future fluctuations in COVID-19 infection rates.
  - There is the potential for a seasonal upswing in infection rates this coming fall.
  - Fourteen-day quarantine periods are a frequently employed mitigation technique in controlling the spread of the virus. Thus, significant potential to schedule disruption exists.
  - The current mortality rate from COVID-19 in New Mexico is 1 in 22. Minimizing exposure is paramount to the health and welfare of our employees and contractors.
  - The duration and magnitude of the pandemic are currently unknowns.
- The HMC-GRP site has and continues to operate in a diminished capacity due to the effects the COVID-19 virus has had on our Staff thus far in the pandemic.
  - We are entering our third month of operation with 50% of our Technicians.
  - Professional Staff are working from home as much as possible per guidance in our company COVID-19 response plan.
  - We are maintaining our functionality, but at diminished efficiency.

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Following the review of health risks to employees, contractors, and operational risk to the integrity of hydraulic containment, the decision was made to stand down and defer the project. The decision was shared with the main Contractors involved in the EP-1 relining project on afternoon of May 13, 2020 and shared with our Regulatory Agencies on May 14, 2020.

HMC remains committed to the successful remediation of the site. Deferment will mitigate the risks associated with employee health and welfare, and risks to schedule disruption thereby avoiding system shutdowns due to pond capacity constraints.

Should you have any questions or comments regarding the project, please contact me at [dpierce@barrick.com](mailto:dpierce@barrick.com) or (505) 283-9701.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David W. Pierce".

David W. Pierce  
Closure Manager  
Homestake Mining Company, Grants, New Mexico

cc: Document Control Desk, NRC, Rockville, Maryland (hard copy)  
A. Winton, NMED, Santa Fe, New Mexico (electronic copy)  
M. Purcell, EPA, Dallas, Texas (electronic copy)  
C. Thompson, NMOSE, Santa Fe, NM (electronic copy)  
M. McCarthy, Barrick, Salt Lake City, Utah (electronic copy)  
D. Lattin, Barrick, Elko, Nevada (electronic copy)  
R. Whicker, ERG, Albuquerque, New Mexico (electronic copy)