

November 14, 1997

50-135

MEMORANDUM TO: Seymour Weiss, Director
Non-Power Reactors & Decommissioning
Project Directorate
Division of Reactor Program Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

FROM: Stewart W. Brown, Project Manager [ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:]
Low-Level Waste and Decommissioning
Projects Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

SUBJECT: STATUS OF TERMINATED NON-POWER REACTOR SITE -
WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL FACILITY HOMOGENEOUS
REACTOR L-54 (LICENSE NO. R-85, DOCKET NO. 50-135)

I am responding to your memorandum dated October 2, 1996, to Mike Weber. In that memorandum you noted that information provided by the Army was incorrect related to where the formally licensed homogenous reactor L-54 was located when it was operational. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission now knows that the L-54 reactor was located in the subbasement of Walter Reed Annex Building 40. Therefore, it is necessary for NRC to ensure that this area complies with NRC's unrestricted use criteria.

This matter was referred to Region I for follow up. Region I determined that the Army conducted other recent NRC licensed activities in Bldg. 40. The licensee ceased these other licensed activities and plans to decommission the entire building for unrestricted use. Region I, in its letter to the licensee dated October 9, 1997, noted that NRC plans to resolve the remaining L-54 remediation issues under the decommissioning program review for NRC License No. 08-01738-02.

NMSS agrees with the Region's approach to ensure that the L-54 reactor area in the Bldg. 40 subbasement is remediated as part of an overall building remediation effort. A copy of the Region's October 9, 1997, letter is attached. If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-3605.

Attachment: As stated

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

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DATE	11/12/97	11/13/97	11/14/97								

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
476 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406-1416

October 9, 1997

License No. R-85 (Terminated)
Docket No. 50-135 (Retired)

Colonel William Johnson, Radiation Safety Officer
Walter Reed Army Medical Center HPO
Bldg. 41, Rm. 38
682E 16th Street N/W
Washington, DC 20307-5001

Dear Col. Johnson:

This letter refers to the matters that we discussed on July 18 and August 6, 1997, concerning the former 50 kW pool-type research reactor in Building 40 (Bldg 40) of the Walter Reed Facility that was operated by the Department of the Army from 1962 to January 1970.

As explained in these telephone conversations with you, the NRC records for this license were reviewed as part of an NRC program to ensure that facilities, where activities were authorized by AEC and NRC licenses that have been terminated, are suitable for release for unrestricted use in accordance with current NRC guidelines. As part of this program, our contractor, Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), reviewed each terminated license file and scored it according to a system designed to identify facilities that require additional review by the NRC staff. In general, files that indicate that licensed material may have been used at particular facilities, but which do not include adequate final survey records for those facilities, are identified for additional review. The review of ORNL identified License No. R-85 as a file describing a site that requires additional review, primarily, because the licensee's final survey indicated that the maximum observed exposure rate was 0.5 millirem per hour (mR/hr). This is in excess of the current NRC guideline for an indoor exposure rate of 0.005 mR/hr above background, and there was no record of an NRC confirmatory survey prior to license termination. In order to close our review of License No. R-85, I contacted you to determine if there were any additional records that would provide current information which indicates that the facility described in the license file meets current NRC criteria for release for unrestricted use.

During our telephone discussion on August 6, 1997, you stated that the former reactor facility was in the sub-basement of Bldg. 40, with the entrance sealed and welded shut since 1971. Further, although License No. R-85 records were transferred to the Walter Reed Army Medical Command (WRAMC), current licensed activities in 350 laboratories in Bldg. 40 are conducted by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, which is a separate army medical command operating under your broad scope medical license.

Attachment

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Colonel W. Johnson
WRAMC

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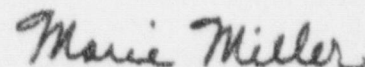
It is my understanding from your statements that Bldg. 40 will be vacated in the near future, which will include renovation of the laboratories, and decommissioning of the entire building, including the sub-basement for unrestricted use. As part of the initial planning for decommissioning this facility, a historical review to characterize the activities conducted in Bldg. 40 is scheduled to begin in FY 98. Also, periodic exposure surveillances of the facility have not identified an external exposure hazard or contamination in areas where people work.

Because access to the former research pool reactor is controlled by a current NRC licensee, we have determined that there is no immediate health and safety concern from residual contamination that may or may not exist in the former pool reactor area. However, future unrestricted use of this building will require documentation that both the research laboratories and the sub-basement meet the current NRC release criteria. Further, the decommissioning timeliness rule will require notification to NRC in accordance with the timelines outlined in 10 CFR 30.36, when the licensee decides to permanently cease principle activities in any separate building that contains residual radioactivity that is unsuitable for release in accordance with NRC requirements.

Based on the above information, we plan to close the ORNL review of this file, and continue our regulatory oversight of NRC License No. 08-01738-02 with respect to Bldg. 40 decommissioning activities. However, if my understanding of future planned actions to be taken by the Department of the Army is not correct, please inform me in writing by November 7, 1997, as to the disposition of the former pool reactor area. For any questions, I am available at (810) 337-5205.

Thank you for responding to our request for this record review.

Sincerely,



Marie Miller
Senior Health Physicist
Decommissioning & Lab E. Unit

cc:

Dr. Michael Koenig, RPO
WRAIR
Bldg. 40
6825 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20207-5001

District of Columbia