



## Department of Energy

Oak Ridge Operations  
Post Office Box 62  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831 -8651

CDL

July 8, 1998

Mr. Steven A. Toelle  
Nuclear Regulatory Assurance  
and Policy Manger  
United States Enrichment Corporation  
2 Democracy Center  
6903 Rockledge Drive  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Dear Mr. Toelle:

### **HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM REFEEED - PLUGGED CYLINDER VALVES**

By letter dated June 10, 1998, the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that cylinder valve replacement activities had been completed in the X-705 South Annex and the facility was ready to revert to NRC regulation. Subsequent to this notification, USEC identified two (2) highly enriched uranium (HEU) cylinders that could not be down blended due to apparent plugged valves. Therefore, in a letter dated June 30, 1998, USEC requested the Department of Energy's (DOE) authorization to delay the conversion of the X-705 South Annex to NRC regulation to perform an unplugging operation on the two (2) valves. Additionally, USEC identified that cleanup of two (2) compressors and 24 valves might also be performed in the South Annex in the same time frame.

Members of the Regulatory Oversight (RO) staff have reviewed the appropriate Nuclear Criticality Safety Approvals/Evaluations, the Plant Change Review and associated Safety Evaluation, and the implementing procedure for the proposed valve unplugging operation. In addition, two (2) members of the RO staff visited the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant site and conducted interviews of the USEC Chemical Operations and Maintenance staff scheduled to perform this evolution. Based upon these activities, DOE hereby grants conditional approval to proceed with this operation. This approval is contingent upon completion of the Chemical Operator training scheduled for Thursday, July 9, 1998. Completion of this activity will be verified by the DOE Site

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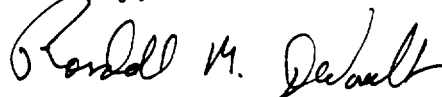
Safety Representative prior to initiation of the evolution. Therefore, you are required to notify him as soon as possible upon completion of this training activity. Additionally, please note that the Technical Safety Requirements/Transitional Requirements required by our X-705 Operational Readiness Assessment Report are applicable to this activity as well. See our letter to you dated May 8, 1998.

The unplugging evolution is expected to be completed prior to the need for the performance of any activities associated with cleaning of valves and compressors; therefore, our review has not included these activities. This approval is limited to the unplugging of two (2) HEU cylinder valves and will require further review by DOE RO should the need arise to clean any valves and compressors in the X-705 South Annex.

Our approval for the unplugging of the HEU cylinders will be documented in the abovementioned X-705 Operational Readiness Assessment Report. A revision to this report will be forthcoming in the near future.

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Mr. David Mardis of the Regulatory Oversight staff at (423) 241-4706.

Sincerely,



Randall M. DeVault  
Regulatory Oversight Manager  
Office of Assistant Manager  
for Enrichment Facilities

cc:

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