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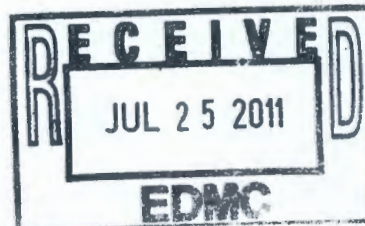


Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550
Richland, Washington 99352

11-EMD-0055

MAY 13 2011

Mr. E. R. Skinnarland
Nuclear Waste Program
State of Washington
Department of Ecology
3100 Port of Benton Boulevard
Richland, Washington 99354



Dear Mr. Skinnarland:

NOTIFICATION OF INABILITY TO PERFORM RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY ACT INSPECTIONS OF CONTAINER STORED IN THE 2404-WB BUILDING AT THE WASTE RECEIVING AND PROCESSING (WRAP) FACILITY

With this letter the U. S. Department of Energy Richland Operations Office (RL) is notifying Ecology that due to circumstances beyond its control, required weekly inspections of containers stored in the 2404-WB building at the WRAP facility have been temporarily stopped. The information below provides an explanation of the situation causing the inspections to be stopped. Radiological safety requirements under the Atomic Energy Act mandate that access to the building be restricted until the situation causing the potential exposure problem has been corrected. Inspections of the containers stored in 2404-WB will resume as soon as possible.

At approximately 8:40 a.m. on April 26, 2011, while inspecting drums for a waste shipment, a WRAP Nuclear Chemical Operator and Radiological Control Technician identified drum 0062288, located in Row 8 of Building 2404-WB, with fluid on the bottom edge of the drum, on the pallet beneath it, and on the floor. The amount of fluid was estimated to be twenty milliliters (ml). Surveys indicated greater than 1,200,000 disintegrations per minute (dpm) per 100 centimeters squared (100 cm²) direct alpha contamination. No beta gamma contamination was identified. At the time of the event, the area was posted as a Radiation Area/Radioactive Material Area. No building ventilation was on at the time. No air sampling was in place at the time of discovery. Drum 0062288 is a 55-gallon drum that contains beryllium-contaminated, transuranic-mixed waste that was generated from the Hanford Site 300 Area. A recovery plan was developed and implemented to over-pack the drum, clean up the release, and manage the waste generated during conduct of the recovery plan. On May 1, 2011, after the first recovery entry, it was confirmed that drum 0062288 has a pin head size hole on the side of the drum approximately two inches up from the bottom edge of the drum. It was estimated that the spill had grown to 200-300 ml. The highest radiological reading of the spilled material was 33,000,000 dpm per 100 cm² direct alpha.

Due to the levels of contamination and the constituents in the waste, Building 2404-WB was immediately posted as a High Contamination Area, Airborne Radioactivity Area, and a Beryllium Contamination Area at the time of discovery. To protect workers, access to 2404-WB

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is restricted to properly trained workers supporting the recovery work. These workers are required to wear self-contained breathing apparatus and chemical resistant suits until contamination levels are reduced requiring lower levels of respiratory and personal protective equipment.

As this release was discovered on April 26, 2011, the weekly dangerous waste inspection for 2404-WB could not be performed. In addition, it is not expected that the weekly inspection personnel will be able to access the building until the contamination is cleaned up. At this time, qualified workers are actively working to address this contamination in accordance with a recovery plan; however, it is undetermined as to when access to the building to perform weekly inspections will be possible. It is noted that progress has been made in the implementation of the recovery plan with the overpacking of drum 0062288 and the wrapping of the contaminated pallet on the evening of May 3, 2011.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Larry D. Romine, on (509) 376-4747.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Weil, Director
Environmental Management Division

EMD:CEC