

July 6, 2000

Dr. Yoon I. Chang
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Argonne National Laboratory
9700 South Cass Avenue
Argonne, IL 60439-4832

Subject: Argonne National Laboratory Follow-Up Program Review

Dear Dr. Chang:

This letter is intended to provide you with the results of the Department of Energy's (DOE or Department) Office of Enforcement and Investigation follow-up program review of the Price-Anderson Amendments Act (PAAA) Program at Argonne National Laboratory-East (ANL-E or Laboratory). DOE's initial review, conducted during July 1999, identified a number of deficiencies in the Laboratory's PAAA Program. This follow-up review on May 17-18, 2000, was deemed an opportunity to assist the Laboratory in its efforts to calibrate more closely with the expectations of the Department, in particular, the issues associated with Enforcement Letters dated September 22, 1999, and February 17, 2000, as well as an Enforcement Action dated December 14, 1999.

In its follow-up review, the Department noted substantial improvement in certain areas of the Laboratory's PAAA program. The identification of and reporting on PAAA noncompliances is improving, as well as the timeliness of such reporting. Additionally, efforts are underway to implement appropriate Quality Assurance controls in the procurement process, and issues are being resolved satisfactorily in the appropriate accreditation of personnel dosimeters and bioassay program documentation.

DOE also found indications that the Laboratory is beginning to improve its ability to conduct root cause analysis of noncompliances. In particular, the analysis of a [nuclear safety] control issue related to Noncompliance Tracking System (NTS) report NTS-CH-AA-ANLE-ANLEET-2000-0001, was, in DOE's view, much improved. The rigor implicit in this analysis has frequently been absent from prior NTS reports.

Several continuing problems were also identified during the course of this follow-up review. DOE is concerned that the Laboratory has not adequately investigated the perceptible lack of independence of the Health Physics professionals assigned to provide radiation protection services. This problem may result in part from a lack of understanding by some managers of the appropriate and valuable role of the Health Physics group. It is particularly important that such managers understand that safety personnel are an investment in the effective operation of their divisions and not a cost that interferes with their ability to conduct science programs.

An additional matter of some import involves the development of effective corrective actions in the resolution of NTS reports. DOE understands that it is the Laboratory's preference to address such matters by committee. As long as such committees conduct their work in a timely and effective manner and adequately consider the site-wide implications of events, it is a process with which DOE takes no exception. It appears, however, that the committee deliberation process is delaying the timely implementation of corrective actions--when compared to other DOE sites--and may, on occasion, result in less than optimal corrective actions. It is also unclear to DOE that the committee recommendations will, in fact, be successfully implemented at the Laboratory since they apparently need to be independently ratified by Division Directors in at least some circumstances.

DOE appreciates the opportunity to meet with you last May and we anticipate continued improvement as we monitor these issues in the future. No reply to this letter is necessary. Please contact Howard Wilchins of my staff at (301) 903-0107 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



R. Keith Christopher
Director
Office of Enforcement and Investigation

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