

**2008 Facility Representative Workshop
CTA Keynote Address
Tuesday, May 13, 2008, 0830 - 0900**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am Bill Ostendorff, the NNSA Principal Deputy Administrator- I also serve as NNSA's Central Technical Authority. I joined the Department a little over a year ago, and consider it a privilege to be a part of your team. During this time, I have been impressed with the high caliber of individuals in our organization who are dedicated to supporting the Department's critical national security mission.

I appreciate the opportunity to be at this year's annual Facility Representative workshop. Facility Reps are the "eyes and ears" of our Department's managers, our "true first line of defense" in ensuring the safe operation of our complex facilities. The time you spend on the floor, overseeing the many different types of operations at a variety of hazardous nuclear and nonnuclear facilities across the DOE Complex, forms the

foundation of our effectiveness as self-regulators for our nuclear activities.

The annual facility representative workshop provides an important opportunity for Facility Reps from across the DOE Complex to discuss their experiences and lessons learned in overseeing operations at their facilities. As you interact with your colleagues during breaks and over meals, I hope that this workshop stimulates greater communication and coordination within the Facility Rep community once you return to your facilities.

This morning, I would like to take the opportunity to focus on three topics that will hopefully convey senior DOE management's perspective on the critical role of Frs. These are:

- **First, the importance of Facility Representative technical competence**
- **Second, the importance of your “deckplates” presence in your respective facilities**
- **And third, the importance of Department Facility Reps to senior Departmental leaders; and**

First, I will address how critical your individual and collective technical competence is to the operation of our facilities. I will draw largely on my experience as a nuclear-trained submarine officer as I firmly believe these two professions have much in common-as do you and I. And, it is that common shared experience and operating environment that highlights for me personally how important you are to the DOE complex. These comments apply to all facility reps, irrespective whether you are serving at an NNSA site or one serving at one of the Department’s Science laboratories.

My first “sea story”, if I may, concerns the importance of basic technical competence in science and engineering- a requisite for nuclear submarine officers and Facility Reps alike. The Navy’s “process” for vetting “suitable” candidates for the nuclear propulsion program was “legendary”, almost entirely due to the high standards, stubbornness, and somewhat irascible nature of one man- the “Kind Old Gentleman” otherwise Known as Admiral Hyman G. Rickover.

I had the dubious privilege of being interviewed by the Kind Old Gentleman in his Crystal City NAVSEA Office in November 1975. I was a 21 year old First Class Midshipman, 8 months away from graduation from the United States Naval Academy and commissioning as an Ensign. I was eager to serve in submarines in the “cat and mouse” arena with the Soviet Union that characterized submarine operations during the Cold War. Quite frankly, however, based on the historical lore of how “Rickover Interviews” typically went- and I have never

heard a Rickover story that I thought to be false- my classmates and I were by and large scared to death of what might happen on that infamous interview day . I was a Systems Engineering Major-Rickover despised them- too “high fallutin” according to the Admirals’ electrical engineering background. Events in 5 separate trips to his office over a 10 hour period on that long November day illustrated that there was no harangue too “off base”, no word or phrase too vulgar for this barely five foot tall Admiral to cast at this lowly midshipman. It was an experience I will long remember- to this day, when I recall standing in that “closet” outside his office for an extended period-my “left cheek starts to twitch! ”

The interviews with the Naval Reactors staff that preceded the Admiral’s personal interview focused on determining whether I had a sufficient grasp of science and engineering principles to undertake the “master’s level” graduate degree program in nuclear engineering . That program was embodied in the collective experiences of the journey from Nuclear

Power School to Reactor Prototype training and then ultimately to duty as an engineering division officer leading to qualification to serve as an Engineer Officer on a nuclear powered warship. Although many, if not most, disagreed with his methods, many of which were not “politically correct”, none disagreed with his incessant demand for high standards of technical competence. These standards demanded an in-depth understanding of both of the theory underlying nuclear reactor operations and in the expectation that all personnel, officer and enlisted alike, would have a solid grasp of all aspects of propulsion plant operations and maintenance. From drawing from memory the Charging, Valve Operating and Discharge Systems on an S5W submarine reactor plant, to explaining the theory behind neutron leakage in the six factor formula when withdrawing control rods during a reactor plant startup following an extended shutdown to mastering how to parallel, in a hurry, turbine generators when experiencing a fire in an electrical distribution switchboard-we were expected,

and rightfully so, to master it all. This culture of insistence upon high standards of technical competence carried throughout my 26 years in the naval nuclear propulsion program.

I am pleased to observe that this “culture” is alive, and well and thriving in the Department of Energy’s Facility Rep program and is clearly evident in you, today’s audience. You, both the individual and collective body of Facility Reps, are the Department’s “Front Line of Defense”. You undergo a rigorous and comprehensive training regimen, on that demands not just familiarity but rather mastery. You are expected to have that detailed technical understanding of advanced scientific and engineering principles, but from my perspective, in an environment more challenging than the one I experienced in submarines. Many of you operate day to day in truly unique, if not “one of a kind facilities”. When I was a junior officer on USS George Bancroft (SSBN 643) in the 1970’s, there were 40 other submarines like mine with a shore,

shipyard and Naval Sea Systems Command support structure that was well tuned to addressing problems with entire classes of submarines. When I took command of USS NORFOLK in 1992, the Navy had 100 attack submarines with approximately 60 boats in the Los Angeles Class-all with a very similar if not identical reactor plant. In short, the naval nuclear propulsion plants were pretty well understood and there was lots of help if you needed to resolve a technical issue.

This is not the case for the Department's Facility Reps. Many, if not most, of you are daily walking around, conducting inspections of facilities that are often "one of a kind", and without the supporting technical cast my fellow submariners and I relied upon to seek help when you confront an unusual or unexpected condition. Though having a fairly solid technical background, I have been personally amazed at what I have seen in our facilities- applied laser physics, facilities intentionally designed to simulating conditions of fusion, highly complex chemical engineering processes in the

environmental management activities at Hanford and Savannah River- the list goes on. In my trips around the complex, I have gained tremendous respect for, in Olympic diving judge parlance, the “degree of difficulty” you face as Facility Representatives each and every day.

This technical competence empowers you to be able to professionally execute on a daily basis a second common “attribute” I share with you-that of growing up in a culture of “being out on the deckplates”, back in the Engineroom or “Machinery Two” from my submarine days. Or for you, our Facility Reps, being out on the work floors at TA-55 at Los Alamos, Building 9212 at Y-12, B-205 at Argonne, the Materials and Fuels Complex in Idaho or the High Flux Beam Reactor at Brookhaven. Bringing your technical understanding with a seasoned, experienced eye to the floors and bowels of our DOE facilities is at the very core of being a Facility Rep. Not many can do this-you are truly in an elite group.

I vividly recall my first pre-watch tour prior to assuming the watch as an Engineering Officer of the Watch trainee at S3G prototype in Ballston Spa New York in 1977- that routine, disciplined “walk around to assess plant conditions, readiness of personnel, maintenance in progress, formality of communications, cleanliness and material condition-the list goes on. That experience was subsequently reinforced by service on six submarines, including as an Engineer Officer and Commanding Officer on nuclear attack submarines. The pre and on-watch tours of the spaces- smelling for the acrid odor of an overheated circuit breaker, looking for steam leaks from high pressure drain valves, detecting wetted steam plant lagging that could lead to carbon steel corrosion of feed system piping- these are just a few.

Your list of “items of interest” in your facilities is more complex and difficult to discern than was mine, but you get the point. To emphasize the importance in my own mind of getting “out and about”, during my three years in command of USS

NORFOLK, I made a habit of going into the engineroom for a “walk-around” every day. In port, I daily conducted a 30 minute walkthrough of selected portions of the submarine with a junior officer in tow to both inspect the ship and more importantly in some small way to communicate my standards for material and operational readiness to this young LT whom one day would have my job as skipper.

I know that I am preaching to the choir-you fully understand and practice this every day at your individual facilities by making the effort to see first hand “what” is being done and “how” it is being accomplished. I disagree with those who might suggest that “virtual tours” or “telephone calls” with status reports suffice- they do not- you just cannot do that from the comfort of your stateroom on the sub or desk back in the site office. Your daily presence-including observations, reports and communications with our contractors about what you see and what needs to be corrected are absolutely critical to our ability to operate. Your role is absolutely critical in

executing our responsibilities as a Department to find and fix our own problems- to in other words, “self-regulate”. Doing you what do- a very difficult task- is essential to the Department having what I will call a “license” with Congress and the American public to conduct daily operations, some of which have the potential to be hazardous.

Now that we have established a common shared background and experience, I will turn to the third theme – that your technical competence and deckplate presence are so very important to senior Department leaders, both in the field and at headquarters. Your role, both now and in the future, remains key to the success of our department’s mission.

Personalizing this a bit to my own experience mission, your effectiveness in doing your jobs directly impacts my ability to do my job. In my role as the NNSA Principal Deputy Administrator, I have authority for oversight of safety

management, and serve as NNSA's Central Technical Authority (CTA). I am directly responsible for NNSA's safety performance, which includes ensuring the consistent and effective application of nuclear safety requirements and guidance across the NNSA Complex. My counterparts elsewhere in the Department have similar responsibilities.

I would like to discuss several specific areas where senior managers count on you to ensure the safe operation of our complex. First, I would highlight the Biennial Review process of NNSA's Chief of Nuclear Safety. This Office reviews NNSA Site Office nuclear safety performance in 18 functional areas that include Conduct of Engineering, Conduct of Operations, Maintenance, Safety Basis, Fire Protection, and Startup and Restart of Nuclear Facilities. You will hear more about our Biennial Review process in a panel discussion later, but many of the central areas covered by the review are areas in which Facility Reps play a key role in ensuring contractor effectiveness. I rely on the Facility Reps to work with site

office management in your day to day interactions to ensure that our facilities are operated safely. And, when reviews such as our Biennial Reviews identify issues to be addressed, I know we can count on the Facility Reps to be involved in evaluating the issues, looking for root causes, and helping to make sure that meaningful corrective actions are put in place. Our confidence in you allows us to turn the corrective actions for issues that are identified completely over to the site office to be addressed without having to worry whether appropriate action will be taken. I know you will go above and beyond what is required to make sure that our missions are accomplished safely.

A second area where you play an important role is in the safety system oversight program. This program is the engineering and configuration management counterpart of the operational oversight provided by Facility Reps, and the two functions should work together to provide accurate and objective information to DOE management. They also

complement each other in collectively maintaining awareness of the operability and effectiveness of safety systems, safety management programs, and operations. Your participation in assessing the effectiveness of safety system oversight at the DOE sites is extremely important to the performance of our “self-regulating” role.

In a third area, that of the Department’s exemption process for orders and directives, you play a critical role in ensuring the technical accuracy and integrity of requests that come forward for CTA review and action. We count on you for your independent technical evaluations and recommendations on all exemption requests.

Fourth, your leadership and communications with the site office and contractors are vital to our day to day operations. With your observation of operations and work activities in our facilities, there is an almost continual interaction between the Facility Rep and both contractor and site office personnel who

have various nuclear safety-related responsibilities. This interaction gives the Facility Rep a unique opportunity to positively influence both the overall nuclear safety performance at their facility, as well as the respective nuclear safety programs at their Site Office. Your hard work has a direct bearing on fostering continuous improvement and excellence in the Department's safety performance. Your personal leadership is vital to ensuring effective day-to-day oversight of contractor operations. As such, senior departmental leaders are personally counting on you to fulfill our role as a self-regulating entity.

Later, I look forward to personally congratulating the nominees for this year's Facility Representative of the Year Award. I also encourage you to continue to pursue excellence in your duties as an FR, and to work with your management in exploring opportunities for career growth such as technical and management training, and temporary assignments to other organizations in the field or at DOE Headquarters. I firmly

believe that FRs are strong candidates for positions of increasing responsibility in DOE.

In closing, I want to offer my personal thanks to each one of you for your tireless efforts and dedication in providing day-to-day oversight of operations at our hazardous nuclear and non-nuclear facilities. You play a key role, one in which you should be proud. I know that I and other senior DOE management are very proud of you! Thank you for your dedicated service. I will now open the floor for any questions you may have.