



**U.S. Department of Energy
Hanford Site**

JUL 23 2012

12-HAB-0026

Ms. S. L. Leckband, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board
Enviroissues Hanford Project Office
713 Jadwin, Suite 4
Richland, Washington 99352

Dear Ms. Leckband:

HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD (HAB) JUNE 8, 2012, CONSENSUS ADVICE #255,
"EMPLOYEE CONCERNS PROGRAM"

Thank you for HAB Advice #255 regarding the Employee Concerns Program (ECP) (enclosed). We appreciate your support for a robust ECP at Hanford and agree that a credible, independent, and trusted program is an important and necessary element of our cleanup mission.

Below are responses to the advice points in your letter.

Advice Point #1: The Board advises DOE and its contractors to consider including non-management personnel (exempt, non-exempt, & Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council) in developing and promulgating employee concerns procedures, policies, and processes, including those addressing personnel protections when submitting concerns into the system. Involving the users of a planned system in its development and presentation can result in a final product that employees will respond to because it more directly meets their needs.

Response: As you know, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) requested several reviews of the Hanford program, which identified numerous recommendations for improvement that we are currently evaluating. In considering these recommendations, we determined that we need additional resources to focus on evaluating and implementing these recommendations. We have detailed Roger Gordon, a senior DOE employee, to this task. One of his responsibilities will be to develop, communicate, and implement a plan to improve the effectiveness and acceptance of the ECP. As part of this assignment, he will work with interested parties such as federal and contractor employees and federal and contractor union leadership to develop a path forward for improvement.

Advice Point #2: The Board advises DOE to reconsider reinstating the Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP) Employee Concerns Program, utilizing best practices to increase employee confidence in the DOE-ORP Employee Concerns Program. The Board believes DOE-

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ORP is better able to address the particular issues raised by DOE-ORP employees and Tank Farms, WTP, and 222 S-Laboratory contractor employees.

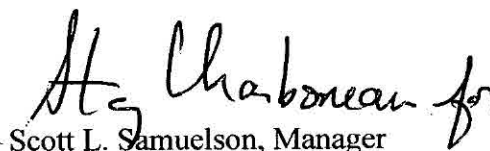
Response: DOE Richland Operations Office (RL) and the Office of River Protection (ORP) believe the combined resources of the federal ECP represent the best organizational construct to receive and address federal and contractor employee concerns. As part of DOE's ECP process, the applicable DOE Line Management (RL or ORP) will continue to have oversight, to include assisting in investigations (investigation or review of contractor investigation responses), and closure of its respective employee concerns. As part of our continuous improvement plan, we are evaluating additional options to potentially strengthen these processes.

Advice Point #3: The Board advises the DOE Employee Concerns Programs at Hanford to rigorously investigate and address any and all allegations of reprisal by employees for raising a concern, as well as any potential chilling effect that may have resulted (whether alleged or validated) within the workforce. Any finding by the Employee Concerns Program of reprisal or discrimination against an employee for raising an issue should be acted upon by the agency in a manner that provides redress to the employee and accountability to the contractor personnel responsible for the reprisal.

Response: All employee concerns regarding allegations of reprisal by employees, as well as any potential chilling effect that may have resulted, are taken seriously, rigorously investigated, and where concerns are validated, appropriate actions are taken to prevent recurrence. The DOE ECP investigates concerns within its jurisdiction, and evaluates each concern received to determine the proper investigative authority. In some cases, concerns are referred to the Contractor ECP for investigation; however, the DOE ECP maintains the ultimate closure authority of these concerns.

Thank you again for your advice on the Hanford ECP. We are moving forward with actions to improve the ECP consistent with our continuous improvement plan, which will result in a more effective and robust program at Hanford. If you have any questions, you may contact me or Tiffany Nguyen at (509) 376-3361.


Matt McCormick, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office


Scott L. Samuelson, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Office of River Protection

HAB:TLN

Enclosure

cc w/encl: See page 3

Ms. S. L. Leckband
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