

# HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD

*A Site Specific Advisory Board, Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act*

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US Environmental  
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February 11, 2011

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Matt McCormick, Manager  
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Re: Medical Support Contractor

Dear Messrs. Dowell and McCormick,

## Background

The Hanford medical support contractor has a vital role at the Hanford Site in providing medical services. The Hanford Advisory Board (Board) believes they should be the center of excellence and advocacy for the employees' health. A core value of DOE and its contractor should be the health and safety of employees based on an underlying empathy. There must be clear responsibility for the health and safety of employees among DOE and site contractors.

Responsibility and authority: DOE is the manager of the site as its contracting agent. In that role they are ultimately responsible for the health and welfare of their employees, contractor employees, and subcontractors working at Hanford. The primary site contractors have direct responsibility to implement health and safety requirements for their employees and, in turn, the health and safety of the employees of their subcontractors. The Board also recognizes that the employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety within their sphere of influence.

The Board believes the medical support contractor should have enough authority to work confidentially with employees to influence their treatment and work environment at the Hanford Site. This contractor should also understand its role to support the integrated site priorities. For example, it should make significant contributions by providing data for a site map pinpointing the high medical risk locations from asbestos, beryllium, and other

chemicals, and should lead the effort to provide workers risk based personal communication on the benefits of being tested for beryllium sensitization.

### **Advice**

1. DOE should engage the senior leadership of all the contractors, including the medical support contractor, to clarify their relative roles, responsibilities, and authority with respect to the health of the employees. The contracts and agreements should recognize the lead role and responsibility of the site medical officer and medical contractor in making binding determinations required to be followed by contractors. The result of these discussions should include identification of leadership responsibilities on programs to reduce all key health risks. It should also review protocols on work restriction, medical removal, and confidentiality. The insights gained from these discussions would be useful as input to the upcoming Request for Proposal (RFP) for the medical support contract.
2. DOE should strongly encourage the medical contractor to be an active member of the Hanford Concerns Council, a DOE-supported resource for resolving significant contractor employee concerns and issues, many of which are related to employee health.
3. DOE should ensure that the medical support contractor remains independent with a priority to monitor and promote the health and safety of the Hanford employees. DOE should also ensure that the medical support contractor is integrated into the site worker health and safety objectives on a continuing and regular basis.
4. The Board advises DOE to ask the following questions in the RFP and the respondents should answer them:
  - a. How do you propose providing the necessary quality medical service to the Hanford work force in a cost effective manner?
  - b. How will you assimilate the core competencies of medical and industrial specialists in areas that represent unique risks at the Hanford Site?
  - c. How will you incorporate the best practices and lessons learned from other DOE or industrial sites related to employee health?
  - d. How will you reach out to the local medical community and the work force to educate them on the unique risks of Hanford workers including radiation, beryllium, and chemical vapors?
  - e. How will you place emphasis on the preventative health care of the employees?

- f. What metrics will you use to demonstrate continuous improvement in areas such as progress on the reduction of risk to the employees, e.g., beryllium sensitizations and medical services cost effectiveness?
  - g. How will you collect and analyze epidemiological data to provide a feedback loop that recognizes patterns and potential problem areas based upon patient data, while maintaining the confidentiality of the patients?
  - h. How do you propose to interface and team with the other contractors to support the site priorities, such as identifying new sources of contamination and constructing individualized risk communication to current employees related to their work environment?
  - i. How will you train your own employees on the Hanford risks?
  - j. What are your specific protocols, procedures, and tests for workers who present complaints or express symptoms of chemical exposure? (More specific detailed expectations can be provided to DOE if requested.)
  - k. How will you achieve excellence in communication with the workforce to help them understand their choices for treatment as part of a medical action decision path when there is an exposure or injury?
  - l. How will you give the injured employee the opportunity to determine the third parties present during the medical questioning and examination, including access to an independent employee ombudsman?
  - m. How will you provide help to employees for referrals for medical services to external organizations?
  - n. How will you provide help to employees on managing claims (such as offering assistance to employees on filing worker compensation claims, pursuant to Revised Code of Washington 51.28.010)?
  - o. How will you protect the confidentiality of the patient's personal medical history and file?
5. The RFP should require the leadership of the prospective Hanford Site medical provider to exhibit principles of behavior that include caring for employees, teamwork with other site contractors, and a drive for improvement. This should be tested during the oral examination exercises for contractor selection.

Sincerely,

Susan Leckband, Chair  
Hanford Advisory Board

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*This advice represents Board consensus for this specific topic. It should not be taken out of context to extrapolate Board agreement on other subject matters.*

cc: Nick Ceto, Co-Deputy Designated Official, U.S. Department of Energy, Richland  
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