

**FINAL MEETING SUMMARY**

**HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD  
HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE  
May 16, 2007  
Richland, WA**

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*This is only a summary of issues and actions in this meeting. It may not represent the fullness of ideas discussed or opinions given, and should not be used as a substitute for actual public involvement or public comment on any particular topic unless specifically identified as such.*

**Welcome and Introductions**

Keith Smith, Health, Safety and Environmental Protection (HSEP) Committee Chair, welcomed everyone and introductions were made. Corrections to the March meeting summary were discussed. No other changes were requested and the meeting summary was adopted.

**Discussion on Worker’s Compensation**

Karen Lutz, Department of Energy – Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL), introduced Juli Yamauchi as the new full time employee dedicated towards workers compensation issues.

Juli, DOE-RL, reviewed the Department’s safety activities over the last two years. She said in June 2005 DOE heard issues on general worker treatment and workers compensation. DOE initiated an independent review of these issues. The review came back with no findings. However, the report did outline opportunities for improvements in customer service. DOE-RL implemented all of the recommendations made in the State’s review. DOE-RL also has discussed sharing these best practices with Labor and Industries (L&I).

Juli said Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI) also took recommendations from the study. CCSI has insured they are meeting the 30 day rule: they review each open file every 30 days and insure contact was made with the claimant. Juli said early contact was a recommendation in the review. CCSI makes contact within 24 hours of a claim being

filed, if no one can be reached they leave a voice message and a written letter is sent. Juli said CCSI has hired a supervisor; both supervisors and managers review cases. If it is a complex claim then an adjudicator will be more involved. With the increase in staff CCSI has reduced case loads to 125 per examiner.

The independent study also challenged the tone of correspondence and verbal skills used with claimants. Juli said CCSI is working to improve their wording and tone of conversations so they can help injured workers understand the claims. Juli said DOE-RL is working on being more available and that is helping. She said the Department sends out survey cards at the closure of a claim, or at 60 or 90 days of the claim, to ask how the process went. DOE-RL receives a report detailing these surveys quarterly.

Juli reviewed the methods she is using to help share information. She attends the Beryllium Awareness Group (BAG) meeting every month and has been receiving good feedback. The workers can ask questions and she can come to the next meeting with answers. There is also a monthly meeting with CCSI and contractors where the group reviews concerns or questions about open claims. They discuss paths forward and methods for getting more information from workers. Juli thought the workers compensation representatives are happy with this approach and feel like their concerns are being heard and can move forward.

Juli said DOE-RL is advocating for implementing Vocational Counselors (VOC) sooner. Juli thinks the sooner a VOC counselor is put on a case, the sooner they can help the person get back to work. Juli said the VOC can see the worker in action and understand what the issues are. They can work with the company to accommodate the worker with their restrictions to get them back on the job or to find another job if they cannot go back to their original job.

Juli developed a website on Hanford.gov dedicated to workers compensation, although it is not complete yet. Juli has included references on the website that can help the employee understand what the doctor is supposed to look for. She also provided a link to L&I webpage, and said it is simple to use and a really great resource. Juli will do a live presentation of her own website and L&I's at next month's BAG meeting. For individuals that do not have access to the Internet, Juli can print copies and send the information to them. Juli said books are sent to all claimants to use that guide them through the workers compensation process.

Juli discussed a medical structure treatment form she developed with AREVA (the old Exxon fabricator). She took AREVA's medical treatment form and modified it. The form has ten questions the claimant should ask the doctor during the exam and has a place for doctor's comments. The contractors give it to employees when they make a claim. This form helps insure that the claimant gets the information they need.

### **Committee Discussion**

- *Do you find that the claims are more complex at Hanford?* Juli said that is not necessarily true. Other places have exposure that is the same, and any claim even if it is just a hip, can become complex easily.
- *Keith said when he used to work on the site, management would insist that the employee be 100% before they come back.* Juli said she has heard that too. She said a good example was the resistance she saw to not hiring a VOC until the person is 100%. When the VOC first came out, Juli said there was some resistance, but more people are understanding that the VOC is there to be neutral, not to side with the employee, but to see what is going on and to work with everyone.
- *The employee used to spend the time away training to learn new skills until they were ready to go back to work, is that still the case?* Julie said L&I has just passed a five year project to give the employee more money and time to go to school. Juli said previously the employee received \$1,000, or approximately one year of retraining. Now they get enough for two years of retraining at any college (about \$9,000). This will go into effect in September.
- Jim Trombold advised Juli to find the key person to get her medical form to at the doctor's office. This will help facilitate getting the paperwork done more promptly. The form is not a requirement however. Juli said she is also holding a new monthly meeting with AdvanceMed Hanford (AMH) and CCSI to encourage better communications. AMH is not a physician, but CCSI can help get information to them.
- Jim advised Juli to consider creating an orientation video about the workers compensation process; a short teaching video that workers who are starting this process could watch. Jim said any teaching aids that are more than a written pamphlet would be good.
- Keith said DOE has a major impact on the medical community. Juli said L&I has started a new project to meet with employers that have doctors that are currently not working with L&I. They hope to find out what the issues are and get feedback. They will invite employers from all over the Tri-Cities. She will hold these meetings in June, and then meet with employees afterwards. Juli assured the committee that DOE is working to make the system better.
- Margery Swint said doctors receive numerous continuing education topics at seminars. Margery suggested that Juli might consider contacting the doctors running the seminars and bring this in as a topic. Margery also said if Juli knows what doctors would be interested in L&I, she could approach them and suggest a topic for a monthly meeting as well. Juli said she will pass that suggestion on to L&I.
- *Are you aware of Bechtel Hanford, Inc. employees that are disgruntled with compensation specialist?* Bob Parazin said he received calls from two different employees that had trouble with Bechtel and L&I. Juli said that it is probably Bechtel National which is separate from what happens on the site. Bob will continue to monitor the situation and bring it to the committees attention if need be.
- Julie said she wanted to let the committee know that she checked the numbers on denied claims and the average denied claims is 8%. The average was 15% to 17% nation wide.

- Karen said DOE-RL has talked with Tom Carpenter and Lea Mitchell of Government Accountability Project (GAP) about workers compensation issues. Preemptive care issues came up and they are looking at improvements that GAP recommended. They can not do anything on preemptive care at the site level because of regulators. Karen said DOE-RL has an ongoing dialogue with Lea about the areas where they could implement solutions.
- *Have CCSI workers attended one of the conferences at the HAB?* Karen said they have not. Charlie Weems said it would seem that the adjudicators might get something out of the presentation as well. He asked that a representative of the workers present to the adjudicators.

### **Draft Advice/Letter Discussion**

Jim began by clarifying the content of the draft advice. He said he thought that this was going to be a letter but the committee is referring to it as draft advice. Jim wanted to recognize that the committee is talking about acknowledgement of the actions taken by DOE in response to the State of the Site meeting. Jim thought this should be labeled a letter. The committee agreed.

No comments were received on the draft emailed to the committee.

Jim questioned the intent of asking DOE to come up with measurements. Keith said if DOE measures the number of unsatisfied or disaffected people that would help in measuring progress. Jim suggested the letter could tell them to keep providing updates to the committee, which might include metrics. Bob asked what numbers would give the committee an understanding of progress. Keith responded that the number of complaints would. One of the issues was the length of time it takes for claims to go through. Bob suggested the committee should reference a time on how long it takes from the time the claim is made until it is closed. Bob suggested that the metrics do not need to be itemized in this letter.

Bob wanted to clarify a point Juli made about DOE not covering Bechtel National because they are not a Hanford site contractor. Erik Olds, DOE – Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP), clarified that Bechtel is building the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) and they do not have a specific contract but a broad scope of work so their contract is different from others on the site. Bob asked if that means the committee should not be concerned about them. Keith said that they would be if there were a lot of complaints, but so far they have not heard any.

Charlie asked what strength DOE has over Bechtel on workers compensation issues. Erik said he will get an answer but would assume that DOE has as much control as it has with any other contractor. Erik said because their system is different, and they have their own medical process, does not mean DOE has any less control over what happens there. He added that Bechtel is getting ready to increase their staff levels.

Karen asked if the bullets on the second page are still being including. She said Juli spoke about the last bullet a lot about today and asked the committee to keep that in mind. Susan suggested that maybe the committee should cite that specifically as something that is already started. Keith will work on changing that wording.

Charlie said the last bullet needs to be changed too. He said the workers have already communicated that they appreciate the steps they have taken. He is unsure the reverse has happened; that the adjudicators are educated about workers issues. Keith said the adjudicator had a training but was not sure to what degree they got that. Charlie encouraged a two way education process. Other committee members agreed. Charlie asked if adjudicators could be added in the last paragraph. The committee agreed with that change.

Susan said they have already assigned a full time staffer so the language should be changed to reflect that. Charlie clarified the paragraph speaks to the intent of the letter and the next line explains that it was done. Keith said in the next paragraph they compliment DOE on the steps they have taken so far. Sharon Braswell said it would be nice if the committee put a statement in there about Juli's position because DOE hardly ever adds new staff. Keith said he will work on the paragraph wording. Cathy McCague will send a revised letter out this week for review by the committee. She needs committee consensus by Monday to include it in the Board packet.

### **Discussion on Committee Work Plan**

Cathy said the committee does not have a work plan right now. Jim clarified that it is a plan for the rest of the calendar year.

The committee agreed that they would like another meeting on workers compensation. Keith said with the new contracts coming on board, there is a concern with how integrated safety management gets transferred, that there is uniform worker management continued across the site. The committee needs to make sure the programs continue. Keith said he would be the Issue Manager for that topic. Mike Priddy added the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) contract is being reviewed and a portion of Battelle works under it. The committee might want to monitor how that develops.

Susan reminded the committee that part of their title is environmental protection and they should not solely address worker safety. Susan suggested a potential topic is the transportation of nuclear waste off site. She said there are plans for Plutonium (PU) to leave the site, and the committee might think about emergency and environmental protection plans. Keith agreed that the committee should review those plans. Susan added the committee should also look at deciding how those plans are transferred to new contractors.

Keith said it has been three years since HSEP looked at off site monitoring and it would be good to readdress it.

Susan said the Board has asked all committees to look at their work plans partially because of funding. She explained that they need to know how many meetings the committee will need to address issues. The work planning process will also help the committee stay focused.

Karen said she is trying to figure out how HSEP can support the other committees. She is trying to identify ways that HSEP can integrate more with River and Plateau (RAP) committee and other committees in the environmental protection realm. Keith said HSEP has struggled with this. Karen encouraged those HSEP committee members who attend the technical committees to play a more active health and safety role. Karen suggested the need to integrate committee work. Susan asked to discuss this topic on the Executive Issues Committee (EIC) call tomorrow. Susan suggested the committee break topics into levels and make sure that HSEP takes the issue at level one and then it move up to other committees. Susan said all HAB members need to be good stewards of the work.

### **CH2M Hill Safety Culture Improvements – a Case Study**

John McDonald, CH2M Hill Hanford Group (CHG), provided an overview of CHG's safety issues. His team has been performing the safety work done at tank farms.

The following is a list of safety issues:

- CH2M Hill safety record was the worst in the complex
- Work stoppage
- Grievances
- Vapor concerns
- GAP report
- Enforcement actions
- DOE performance letters
- Inadequate Work Planning
- Poor company-worker relationships

In 2002-2003 DOE sent CHG a letter about tank farms safety performance. John said they put to action their problem identification system, and found problems with the vapor system. In 2003, John was in charge of double shell tank farms, safety performance was impacted by the respirator system. John decided CHG would start a Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) standard. From a production stand point, they negotiated a new Performance Based Incentive (PBI) and closed one tank up to 2006. Now, CHG is at the top of the complex with lost work days. They had 4.35 total lost work days during the first quarter of 2005. Lost work days in the fourth quarter of 2006 was 1.25 days making a decrease of 73%. John said a reduction by a factor of five marked drastic improvements.

John said he thought it was good, new approaches were introduced when CHG changed management. They focused management attention on the importance of worker safety.

They addressed three main topics: notification, management training, and housekeeping. John said the housekeeping that was taken care of helped clean up the site and the company's public relations improved. They have received star status on two of these organizations, and are on their way to get two more organizations approved as well.

Erik said when a company is certified, they are certified at a high level, and they have to get audited to get certified. There are only 23 projects that have received the VPP certification. John said CHG has three programs that have gotten certified. Erik said there is a difference in how companies at Hanford get certified than in other places. Normally a whole company will be certified at once, but at Hanford it was broken up into projects so only one project at a time can be certified.

John said employee involvement on safety issues improved after CHG created Employee Accident Prevention Councils. They also increased their bargaining unit safety representatives from five to seven. John said they had a lot of stop works going on and this helped mediate between managers and workers.

John said they have instituted programmatic initiatives including Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS) work control, Human Performance Improvement (HPI) and Ergonomics. DOE introduced new safety elements and CHG has gone through and incorporated them into their program. John said the resolution of the vapor issues was the largest task accomplished by his team. It showed the company was committed to solving these problems and committed to safety.

John said to date CHG has retrieved seven tanks, and the cost reductions have come down from seven million to five million; the vacuum costs have also come down. There has been new technology introduced into the tank farm retrieval: robots are used to go into the tank and break up the waste to make the process more efficient.

John discussed the Safe Work Environment (SWE) survey results. He said they have 11 attributes to their worker safety program recommended by consultants. John described safety culture as a predictive element and said it helps them to identify weaknesses before an accident. Surveys are a good way to measure how you are doing business. John said the survey measured employee perceptions. John said that this means the results are not necessarily facts but help to show how people are thinking about the work.

John said they received the highest marks in the following areas:

- Employees take actions when they see a problem
- Supervisor support stop work
- Supervisors support safety
- Prevention of retaliation

Areas showing most improvement:

- Communications and trust
- Employee recognition of activities
- VPP and event protection

- CH2M Hill is performing work safely
- CH2M Hill is committed to safety

John mentioned some possible influences of employee perceptions. He said quarterly meetings provide open communication and time for information sharing from Mark Spears, President of CHG, with the whole company. Mark talks about state of the company. John said their turn out has been great, up to 800-900 people have come to each meeting. Employee recognition programs are another positive influence on survey results. HPI is also working by equipping employees with the right tools thus impacting their perceptions.

### **Committee Discussion**

- *What is done about managers that don't buy in to the safety program?* John said as the safety program manager he holds a monthly meeting of the executive review board to discuss safety. He said they moved the rating up from good to excellent this year based on more understanding and support of the program. John remarked that Mark places a high importance on safety and expects others to do the same. John added that CHG retrains new employees and managers on their Safe Work Environment (SWE). They piloted a program that they copied from the WTP that has raised the ownership of employees on safety. The councils have been active and healthy.
- *Could you point out those aspects of the program CHG needs to work on?* John said they scored low on their disciplinary process, performance review process, problem identification and retaliation. Regarding their performance review process, they heard that people do not feel involved enough. John said their retaliation numbers are low but when it happens, management has the responsibility to deal with it. People said it affected their ability to raise safety issues. John said this indicated they need to improve in this area and have done training to help with retaliation.
- *How many safety councils are there?* John said there are five councils: Tank Farm Closure, Waste Feed, In-tank Solidification, North Lab, and 2440 Council. John said the council's job is to raise issues locally around the complex. They will take problems to immediate supervisors. The Vice President can take it to a council meeting and they will go over the VPP program.
- Keith asked that CHG continue to track and document when issues are addressed.

### **Committee Business**

- HAMMER facility tour: Cathy is working with Karen to set this up during the June Board meeting.
- Cathy said the Tank Waste Committee wanted to do a tour of the dryer facility. Erik said it is right across the street from HAMMER and could be done at the same time as the demonstration bulk vitrification systems.



- Keith will work on the changes to the workers compensation draft letter. Cathy will email it out to the committee for consensus.

**Handouts**

*NOTE: Copies of meeting handouts can be obtained through the Hanford Advisory Board Administrator at (509) 942-1906, or tholm@enviroissues.com*

- Worker Compensation Draft Advice, HSEP, May 16, 2007.

**Attendees**

**HAB Members and Alternates**

Susan Leckband	Charles Weems	
Bob Parazin		
Mike Priddy		
Keith Smith		
Margery Swint		
Jim Trombold		

**Others**

Karen Lutz, DOE-RL	Sharon Braswell, Ecology	Karen Caddey, CH2M Hill
Juli Yamauchi, DOE-RL		John McDonald, CHG
Lori Gamache, DOE-ORP		Cathy McCague, EnviroIssues
Erik Olds, DOE-ORP		Emily Neff, EnviroIssues