



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
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JUN 02 1999

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DNF SAFETY BOARD

The Honorable John T. Conway, Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Conway:

I appreciate and share the concerns expressed in your letter of May 7, 1999, regarding a recent negative trend in control of work and operations at the Savannah River Site (SRS). Your letter noted that a broader look at the underlying causes and a systematic understanding of those causes would be required to correct weaknesses in performance. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that corrective actions have been and are being taken to address these issues and ensure a sustained, highly satisfactory level of performance.

The Department of Energy (DOE) and Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC) senior management continually examine the causes of Occurrence Reporting and Processing System abnormal and recurring events. In addition, a wide variety of precursors are examined on a routine basis to avoid abnormal and recurring events. Trends are examined for individual programs and for the site as a whole.

The negative trends noted by you have been of concern to both DOE and WSRC senior management for several months and aggressive examination into causes and their applicability to all site operations has been ongoing. I consider that WSRC has been following performance at a detailed/precursor level, that they have self identified problems, and correctly slowed down the tempo of operations to regain full control of work. In addition, WSRC has identified root causes of problems and initiated corrective actions. DOE has maintained oversight of WSRC efforts and has identified the need for additional WSRC corrective actions in some areas. DOE concerns have been adopted by WSRC in a positive fashion. While more time is required to fully assess the impact of recent corrective actions, we believe that corrective actions will be effective in helping turn around the negative trend.

Savannah River Site historically has had a sound foundation for disciplined work and operations. I recognize, however, that continued success depends on more than history and culture; it depends significantly on continual management attention to detail and commitment to excellence. I have enclosed some of our performance indicators which show the improvements achieved in control of work and testing over the past seven years (Enclosure 1); and those that

show the recent negative trend in performance (Enclosure 2). I have also enclosed a copy of the last quarterly assessment of Savannah River Site performance that addressed the negative trend in disciplined operations (Enclosure 3). These quarterly site performance assessments are reviewed by all senior management in DOE-SR and WSRC and they are a critical part of management efforts to ensure that requisite performance levels are clearly understood between DOE and WSRC. In addition, DOE has reviewed the assessments conducted by the WSRC Facility Evaluation Board (FEB) over the past year and notes that FEB assessments continue to be effective in pointing out needed improvements in performance. In particular, the FEB assessments are conducted at a frequency commensurate with performance achieved in site programs.

Contractor and DOE management examination of recent problems has identified several underlying causes that are being addressed by WSRC Senior Management. I believe corrective actions taken to date are broad-based and reflect an understanding of root causes. The WSRC Facility Manager's Council has provided a forum for sharing problems of common interest and for identifying best practices for mitigating problems. The Line Managers that comprise this council are responsible for effective implementation of corrective actions.

DOE Facility Representatives have also been working with the Facility Manager's Council on issues such as lock and tag deficiencies to ensure that expectations are well understood and that uniform implementation across the site is achieved. Additionally, because of recent personnel errors associated with criticality safety controls that have contributed to the negative trend, I have asked WSRC to evaluate the bases for safety in this area with the intention of demonstrating sufficient barriers to prevent events or to correct deficient procedures and requirements. I expect this assessment to be complete by the end of August 1999.

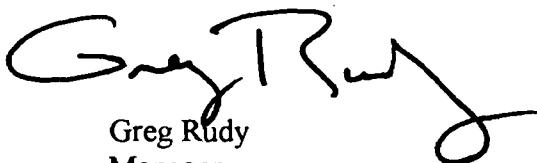
Given the complex and dynamic nature of the work on site and the age of facilities, it is crucial that management be continually vigilant of deficiencies and trends to avert serious problems. My senior management team and I stay abreast of these matters daily and maintain close contact with DOE facility representatives. In the past year DOE has increased the number of facility representatives assigned to chemical separations, the spent nuclear fuel program, and safeguards and security because of the hazards involved in this work and because of performance trends that warrant oversight attention.

WSRC has implemented a number of initiatives to increase management attention in the field and observe work first hand to ensure that requisite standards are met and that problems get proper attention. This has helped to turn around the recent negative trend. I intend to follow closely the increased management attention to control of work and operations. Management continues to examine best practices that can benefit SR performance. For example, borrowing on experience in the commercial nuclear industry that has noted operational benefits from training aids, WSRC has implemented procedure compliance training utilizing a training aid called the STAR (Stop, Think, Analyze, Respond) Trainer. This mockup device is used for training individual workers on the importance of high quality procedures, procedure compliance,

and the need to be productive but methodical. In addition, WSRC is committed to ensuring that Integrated Safety Management System core functions and guiding principles continue to be emphasized in all training conducted. WSRC has successfully implemented a review of ISMS functions during critiques of events to ensure that such an emphasis is maintained. WSRC has also committed to begin implementing improved first line supervisory training this year that will not only provide workers the skill set required to perform their duties, but will also provide a full assessment of each individual's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, WSRC has begun implementing behavior-based safety in an effort to improve employee ownership for safety.

In summary, the recent downward trend is a concern. Actions have been taken to systematically understand and address underlying causes for the recent negative trend in work control. The focused attention of management, effective corrective actions, and emphasis on Integrated Safety Management should support a sustained and highly satisfactory level of performance and we will monitor this closely. I appreciate your letter on this matter and the opportunity to provide you additional information. As always, we are pleased to keep the Safety Board and Site Representatives advised of the details and progress of corrective actions, both near-term and long-term.

Sincerely,



Greg Rudy
Manager

NA-99-022

Enclosures:

1. SRS Disciplined Operations
Performance Indicator Index
2. Recent Issues & Current Status
3. 2nd Quarter Technical Capability
and Performance Chart

cc w/enclosures:

Ambrose L. Schwallie, WSRC



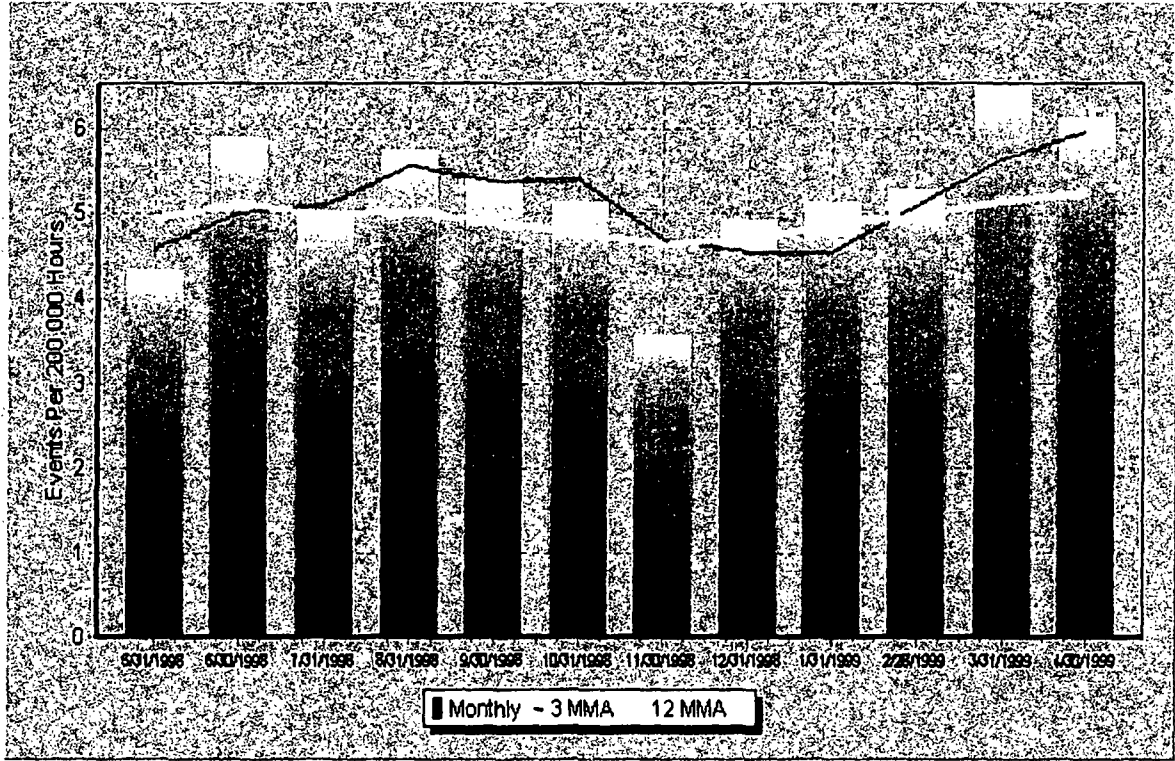
Operations

Evaluation

Department

Recent Issues and Current Status

SITE Disciplined Operations PI



	5/98	6/98	7/98	8/98	9/98	10/98	11/98	12/98	1/99	2/99	3/99	4/99
Monthly	4.34	5.9	5.03	5.73	5.42	5.11	3.56	4.93	5.13	5.27	6.54	6.13
3 MMA	4.58	5	5.09	5.55	5.39	5.42	4.69	4.53	4.54	5.11	5.65	5.98
12 MMA	4.95	5.1	4.99	5.03	4.9	4.76	4.65	4.69	4.86	4.98	5.14	5.25

Technical Capability and Performance

Second Quarter Fiscal Year 1999 Performance Review

Section II: General Performance

Improving ↑

Declining ↓

**SKILLED AND
MOTIVATED
WORKFORCE**

Employee Relations ↑

Materials Processed
Toward Stabilization

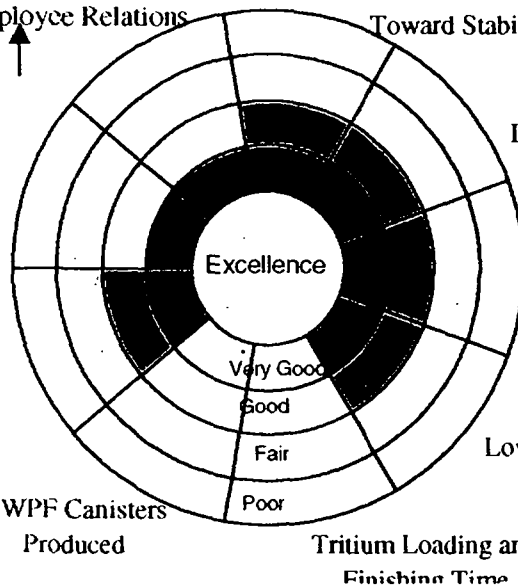
**FACILITY &
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Infrastructure ↑

DNFSB 93-3

Environmental
Release Sites and
Assessments

↓
Disciplined
Operations



↑
DWPF Canisters
Produced

↑
Tritium Loading and
Finishing Time

Facilities and Infrastructure

- Materials Processed Toward Stabilization: Completed Sweepings ahead of schedule. Sand slag & crucible from Rocky Flats is approximately 3 mos behind schedule. Delay due to certification of the 9975 shipping container.
- Infrastructure: PM items exceed CM items for the first time. Trend is a result of streamlining the maintenance system and the implementation of the Passport system, which is progressing satisfactorily
- Environmental Release Sites & Assessments: Release site completion on schedule. Site assessments behind due to complications discovered during characterization of TNX Operable unit. New operable unit strategy sub-mitted to regulators & the ROD submittal has been rescheduled for the 4th Quarter.
- LLW Inventory : Inventory reduction on schedule. Positive actions being taken for further reductions (e.g. Waste Sort Facility operating well, drum compactor projects should be operational in June, & continue working with generators to package directly for supercompaction and CIF).
- Tritium Loading and Finishing Time: Reservoir processing status to meet April/May product commitments looks excellent. Contractor's re-engineering of work practices in Finishing Line during 2Q99 seems to have achieved the desired improvements.
- DWPF Canisters Produced: Achieved better understanding of chemistry (change in sludge batch) and made chemical adjustments accordingly which resulted in an increase in canister production.

Skilled and Motivated Workforce

- Disciplined Operations: Shows an adverse trend primarily in the category of procedure non-compliance. Emphasis needs to be placed on improving attention to detail.
- DNFSB 93-3: Remains on schedule for on-time completion. There are 215 participants, of which 146 have completed 93-3 qualification. There are 37 due by May 31, 1999 and 31 due after May 31.
- Employee Morale: DOE (Rating: 4) All complaints/concerns resolved within org. WSRC (Rating: 4): Employee Relations Effect - results indicate employees feel empowered to raise issues & are confident that mgmt responds in open & fair manner; Staff to Target - normalized attrition 2.4%, indicates employees find working at SRS a positive/satisfying experience. WSI (Rating: 4): employee satisfaction to company perf. experience a reciprocal relationship.