

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 8, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: J. Kent Fortenberry
SUBJECT: SRS Report for Week Ending January 8, 1999

J. DeLoach, F. Bamdad, and W. Shields were onsite this week to review tritium operations and the proposed consolidated safety analysis report for tritium facilities.

DOE-SR Critical Technical Staffing Management Plan - This staffing plan was issued last month in response to a commitment from the revised Recommendation 93-3 Implementation Plan. The staffing plan outlines the DOE-SR strategy for maintaining the minimum federal technical workforce in critical functional areas necessary to provide adequate oversight to protect worker and public health and safety. In this staffing plan DOE-SR illustrates a generally reasonable approach for ensuring that this minimum technical capability is not only met, but will continue to be met over the next five years. DOE-SR concludes that its workforce is "a well-trained, capable technical workforce and has no critical gaps in its ability to oversee the safe operations of the site."

However, these conclusions may be overly optimistic. The staffing plan indicates several challenges and potential vulnerabilities. Since 1995, DOE-SR has reduced its federal staff by more than one hundred. DOE-SR will pursue additional staff reductions to meet DOE FY2000 staffing goals. Moreover, the FY2000 budget represents the potential for additional reductions in the DOE-SR federal staff. At the same time, the scope of work at SRS is expected to increase as a result of new missions, expansion of existing missions, and facility startups and shutdowns.

In addition, the plan indicates that DOE-SR meets minimum requirements but has a limited number of staff qualified in the Technical Expert area. The Technical Expert Area consists of 13 subcategories such as Criticality Safety, Natural Phenomena, Emergency Management, Fire Protection, etc. DOE-SR appears to have been relatively generous in bestowing the qualification of Technical Expert. For example, DOE-SR takes credit for having two Technical Experts in the field of Natural Phenomena. Also, DOE-SR is only able to claim one Technical Expert in the field of Criticality Safety. DOE-SR has identified several activities to maintain and improve its technical capabilities. These include: Technical Qualification Program training, the possible establishment of additional 'exclusive' positions (similar to the facility representatives - see 5/29/98 weekly) that are less vulnerable during a RIF, the use of excepted service, and the potential use of any technical capability made available following site closures.

SRS FY2000 Budget Allocation - As a result of recent DOE and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) agreements, the President's FY2000 budget will likely provide \$5.7B to DOE-EM. Based on this level of funding, the SRS allocation from EM would be \$1.222B, which is about the same funding as in FY1999. This SRS FY2000 allocation is about \$90M below the SRS request, but is about \$250M below recently defined SRS requirements when Alternate Salt Processing activities, APSF cost estimate changes, and H&F Canyon Exhaust Upgrades are considered. The further allocation of \$1.222B among SRS projects in FY2000 will likely result in deferral of construction activities for APSF, significantly reduced funding for the Spent Fuel Treatment & Storage Facility, a reduction in DWPF canister production, and a deferral of Alternate Salt Processing activities. Additional reductions are also likely in areas such as solid waste management and infrastructure.