

Release date: November 13, 1996

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DOE

HANFORD OUTLINES EMPLOYEE CONCERNS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

As a result of a recent assessment on the Hanford Employee Concerns Program, the Department of Energy today announced plans to improve the way the Hanford Site addresses employees who raise concerns in the workplace.

The report, "Employee Concerns Program Hanford Site Assessment" by National Inspection & Consultants (NIC) from Fort Myers, Florida, was developed in response to a request by Energy Secretary Hazel R. O'Leary during her April 1996 Hanford visit after employees raised issues about the site Employee Concerns Program.

NIC recommended modifications in seven key areas of Hanford's program: resources/staffing/budget, training, program scope, investigation process, case files, trending/management information, and program oversight.

Hanford Manager John Wagoner has appointed Jennifer Sands to head the reorganized Hanford Employee Concerns Program for DOE. "I am determined to see that Hanford has an excellent Employee Concerns Program where management and employees work together in a cooperative manner and where employees feel their concerns are appropriately addressed in a timely fashion," Wagoner stated. "Jennifer Sands will serve us well in strengthening our Employee Concerns Program."

DOE headquarters, together with the field offices, will review employee concerns programs at other DOE sites in an effort to incorporate the best practices and standards that an effective program.

"We recognize that we have an opportunity for continuous improvement in the Employee Concerns Program at Hanford," said William A. Lewis, Jr., Director of the Department's Office of Employee Concerns. "We must continue to make the appropriate changes, allocate the necessary resources, provide training, and pursue investigations in a timely manner in all employee concerns programs throughout the DOE Complex. Hanford's program will set the standard for other sites to follow."

The NIC report presented the following conclusions about the Hanford program:

- Employee Concerns Programs (ECP) are generally in compliance with the Departmental Order.
- ECPs are effective in processing a large number of concerns and resolving issues before they become formal concerns, but have not implemented many of the best practices attributes critical in promoting effective resolution of significant concerns.
- Limited surveys indicate that some management and employees share a similar viewpoint that ECPs are not always effective in resolving significant issues, and therefore do not fully endorse the process.
- Enhancement of training is needed for successful implementation of the ECP at the site.

A joint team of Hanford DOE and contractor personnel are developing proposals to implement the report's recommendations.

Copies of the NIC report are available in DOE's Public Reading Room, 100 Sprout Road, Richland, Washington. A summary is also available on Hanford's Home Page at www.hanford.gov.

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RL 96-109

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