

FINAL MEETING SUMMARY

**HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD
HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

*January 7, 2015
Richland, WA*

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

Opening

Becky Holland, Health, Safety, and Environmental Protection Committee (HSEP) chair, welcomed committee members and introductions were made. Becky noted that the meeting summary from the May 2014 HSEP meeting were adopted during the committee’s November 2014 call.

Announcements

Kris Skopeck, U.S. Department of Energy—Richland Operations (DOE-RL), reminded committee members that a public meeting for the Class 3 Permit Modification to the Hanford Facility Dangerous Waste Permit for the Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility would occur following the HSEP meeting. She encouraged committee members to attend if interested.

Tank Farm Vapors Advice*

Introduction

Richard Bloom, HSEP vice chair and issue manager for draft tank farm vapor advice, provided HSEP members with an introduction and background to the advice. Richard noted that the advice would ideally move forward at the February 2015 Hanford Advisory Board (HAB or Board) meeting, and the

* **Attachment 1:** Draft Vapor Advice on Worker Health and Safety

committee discussion was an opportunity for the HSEP committee to consider the advice and to make any appropriate changes.

Richard noted that the recent vapor exposures and the resulting assessment by the independent Hanford Tank Vapor Assessment Team (TVAT) were currently being explored by two HAB committees. HSEP was considering the topic from a worker safety perspective. He stated that the points included in the draft tank vapor advice encouraged the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to ensure that contractors have policies in place that adequately protect tank farm workers.

Committee Discussion and Advice Development

Note: This section reflects individual questions, comments, and agency responses, as well as a synthesis where there were similar questions or comments.

HSEP members reviewed the draft advice onscreen. Edits were made to clarify the intention of certain advice points and remove language of concern. Major discussion points and key changes to the draft advice are summarized below.

Q. Should the Board release advice on tank vapors and worker safety before the implementation plan is released? Is this advice premature?

C. This advice is for DOE, not Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS), and it does not comment on the contractor's implementation plan. It is important for the Board to advocate for worker safety as soon as possible.

C. The TVAT came to the Board and presented the report's findings, and it is important for the HAB to go on record in support of worker health and safety. Some Hanford Site workers have noted the Board's lack of response to the TVAT report, and they are curious as to why there has been no HAB input on the issue yet.

Q. How do tank farm workers feel about the new tank farm protection measures?

R. There are reports that some tank farm employees are not happy with the interim protection measures that are currently in place. Employees often need to wear a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). This equipment is difficult to work in, and there have been some reported concerns about the availability of protective gear and its ability to function at extreme temperatures. Other employees are very happy with the added precautions. Most workers are optimistic about the implementation plan.

R. Carrying heavy SCBA equipment around is very difficult for tank farm workers as they accomplish many of their duties.

C. The TVAT conducted an assessment that provided recommendations to WRPS. The TVAT did not conduct a review or an audit. Phrasing within the advice should be changed to reflect the correct mission of the team.

C. In response to the TVAT's noted recommendations, WRPS will release an implementation plan later in January 2015. The draft advice notes that WRPS will release an action plan. This wording should be changed.

C. [DOE-ORP] The advice should note that WRPS is a DOE contractor, and that it was WRPS who commissioned the Hanford Tank Vapor Assessment Report. In the current draft, this point is unclear. Also, DOE does not manage the contractor's employees. The advice should clearly recognize this.

C. The advice should note that the HAB was provided with briefings by the TVAT following the release of the Assessment Report.

The committee members concluded their discussion and came to consensus on an updated draft of the tank vapors advice. The committee agreed to work in the coming days to finalize the draft advice in preparation for further discussion at the February 2015 Board meeting.

Employee Concerns Program

Agency Presentation

Roger Gordon, DOE-RL Employee Concerns Program (ECP) manager, provided the committee with an annual briefing on the status of the ECP. Rodger's discussion noted the following key points:

- Throughout the last year, DOE and DOE contractors conducted assessments following the adoption of site-wide ECP procedures. One of the major questions that the assessments aimed to answer was "is the ECP better?" Meetings with employees, supervisors, and safety representatives also informed this assessment. Feedback received during the assessment was very positive.
- In the coming year, DOE will assess contractor implementation of the ECP. One contractor will be assessed per quarter.
- DOE has not done any customer surveys yet. Feedback comes from individual conversations. Typically, feedback is positive, and employee trust is on the rise. ECP staff plan to interact with employees in the field more throughout the upcoming year.
- The DOE ECP is open and available to any employee on the site. Employees may choose to engage in a DOE contractor ECP or come directly to the DOE-RL ECP. The DOE-RL office may return the issue to the contractor if appropriate.
- Roughly five percent of submitted concerns have been substantiated.

Committee Questions and Responses

Note: This section reflects individual questions, comments, and agency responses, as well as a synthesis where there were similar questions or comments.

Q. The U.S. Department of Energy—Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP) does an employee survey to gauge worker satisfaction. Do the DOE contractors also conduct these surveys on a regular basis?

R. [DOE-RL] Yes, they distribute the same survey. WRPS created a survey that DOE-RL and DOE-ORP felt was strong, and the agencies adopted it.

Q. Are there many procedural differences between the contractor's ECPs? Are they difficult to bring into alignment?

R. [DOE-RL] The ECPs of the DOE contractors look different on paper; however, they were functionally the same program. Therefore, they were not difficult to align.

Q. How many DOE employees work in the ECP?

R. [DOE-RL] There are two investigators, as well as administrative support. The number of DOE staff that work on the ECP is relatively small, but there are many resources that are at the program's disposal.

Q. Does the ECP produce any metrics that can be shared?

R. [DOE-RL] The ECP provides regular metrics to senior management at DOE-RL on a monthly basis and to senior management at DOE-ORP on a quarterly basis. The provided metrics include the number of concerns that were reported in a given period, whether or not reported concerns were anonymous, and the actions that moved forward. In 2014, 40 concerns were reported by DOE-RL employees and ten concerns were reported by DOE-ORP employees. The ECP investigated and was able to substantiate five concerns from DOE-RL and three from DOE-ORP. A large percentage of reported concerns are not substantiated.

Q. What does a successful ECP look like?

R. [DOE-RL] That is a difficult questions to effectively answer. If the number of reported concerns decreases, that may be indicative of success. Conversely, it may be because people are fearful. If the number of reported concerns rises, that may indicate an unsafe work space. The most effective way to gauge program success is likely by measuring trends in incoming concerns, with special attention paid to where these concerns are coming from.

Q. How "anonymous" are anonymously reported concerns?

R. [DOE-RL] Anonymous concerns are not reported with a name or a contractor on them. The ECP treats all concerns as confidential.

Q. Are anonymous concerns ever substantiated?

R. [DOE-RL] Anonymous concerns are occasionally substantiated.

Q. Are any traffic concerns ever reported to the ECP?

R. [DOE-RL] There were quite a few incoming concerns during the last freezing condition. Aside from this episode, most concerns are not traffic related.

The committee thanked Rodger for his time and his insightful update. The committee reiterated that it was interested in continuing to follow up on DOE's ECP annually, and was hopeful that DOE-RL could share survey results at the next briefing.

Beryllium Program

Agency Presentation

L. B. Sandy Rock, MD, HPM Corporation Occupational Medical Services (HPMC OMS), and Stan Branch, DOE-RL, provided the committee with an annual update on the DOE Beryllium Program and the associated epidemiological study. In their updates**, Sandy and Stan noted the following key points:

- The Beryllium program is interested in identifying where beryllium-sensitized individuals have been and the work that they have been involved in. If individuals with a similar history begin to show signs of sensitization, the contractor needs to be alerted as soon as possible. A confounding factor to this strategy is that different individuals may react to beryllium differently. Some individuals will sensitize relatively quickly, while others will not test as sensitive for several months or years following exposure.
- Employee interviews are conducted by certified industrial hygienists.
- As of November 2014, there are 148 workers who are beryllium sensitized and 37 workers who have been diagnosed with Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD). Of these, 66 beryllium-sensitized workers and 15 workers with CBD are active at the Hanford Site.
- There are many Hanford workers who qualify for the voluntary program and who have worked in known beryllium areas, but they choose not to be tested.

Mark Fisher, Hanford Beryllium Awareness Group (BAG), provided HSEP with a partial questionnaire* for beryllium affected workers. Mark requested that the HAB provide feedback on the questionnaire as soon as possible so that HPMC OMS can begin administering the survey to workers.

* **Attachment 2:** 1.7.4 Hanford Beryllium Work History BeCAP Product (DOE Presentation)

* **Attachment 3:** Hanford Site Chronic Beryllium Disease Prevention Program (DOE-RL Presentation)

* **Attachment 4:** Hanford Site Beryllium Questionnaire, Affected Worker Questionnaire (partial, HPMC OMS)

*Committee Questions and Responses**

Note: This section reflects individual questions, comments, and agency responses, as well as a synthesis where there were similar questions or comments.

Q. Do new Hanford Site employees get tested for beryllium sensitization?

R. [UPMC OMS] Any Hanford Site worker who was or is active in areas where beryllium is suspected to occur will be tested. If a worker tests as beryllium sensitized, they can no longer work at sites where beryllium is known to be present.

Q. What level of beryllium exposure causes CBD?

R. [HPMC OMS] Sarcoidosis is identical to CBD. The only thing that distinguishes the two conditions is a positive Beryllium Lymphocyte Proliferation Test.

Q. Who is running the epidemiological study?

R. [HPMC OMS] National Jewish Hospital is conducting the study. Individuals need to volunteer to participate, and both a control and an affected group were required.

R. [BAG] The number of participants in the study was very low. The study had difficulty reaching individuals outside of the Hanford area. There were between 100 and 200 potential participants, and many of those individuals were disqualified. When the study is finalized (potentially in February 2015), National Jewish will provide a public meeting to announce results.

Q. What happens to workers who test as borderline sensitive to beryllium?

R. [BAG] There is a formula that is followed. Three borderline-sensitive results will categorize a worker as beryllium sensitive.

C. It may not be possible to solicit formal feedback from the HAB before the February Board meeting.

R. [BAG] The Board meeting timing is not ideal for purposes of implementing this survey. If the Board has any substantial comments following survey implementation, the survey could potentially be revisited.

R. It is important that the questionnaire is sent out to the wider committee and the overall Board for feedback. HSEP chairs will discuss this matter with the HAB's Executive Issues Committee on their upcoming call.

The committee thanked the presenters for their time and the provided updates. HSEP leadership committed to exploring strategies for soliciting formal feedback from the Board for the provided beryllium program affected worker questionnaire.

* **Attachment 5:** Transcribed Flipcharts

Attachments

Attachment 1: Draft Vapor Advice on Worker Health and Safety

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Attachment 4: Hanford Site Beryllium Questionnaire, Affected Worker Questionnaire (partial, HPMC OMS)

Attachment 5: Transcribed Flipcharts

Attendees

Board members and alternates:

Richard Bloom	Pam Larsen	Margery Swint
Dirk Dunning	Liz Mattson (phone)	Bob Suyama
Becky Holland	Peggy Maze Johnson (phone)	

Others:

Stan Branch, DOE-RL	Dieter Bohrman, Ecology	Mark Fisher, BAG
Roger Gordon, DOE-RL		Cathy McCague, EnviroIssues (phone)
Jerry Holloway, DOE-ORP (phone)		Ryan Orth, EnviroIssues
Kris Skopeck, DOE-RL		Brett Watson, EnviroIssues
		Larry Sherman, HAMTC
		Emily Bays, HANW (phone)
		John Frouc, HPMC OMS
		June Robinson, HPMC OMS
		L. B. Sandy Rock, HPMC OMS
		Jennifer Copeland, MSA
		Mark McKenna, MSA
		Steve Beehler, Northwind/DOE-ORP
		Sharon Braswell, Northwind/DOE-ORP
		Michelle Searls Northwind/DOE-ORP
		Annette Cary, Tri-City Herald (phone)
		Don Bouchey, Public