

**FINAL MEETING SUMMARY**

**HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD  
HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING  
October 18, 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) Chair welcomed the committee. The committee adopted the May meeting summary.

**Review Response to Worker’s Compensation Advice**

Keith thanked the Department of Energy (DOE) for spending time to address the Board’s concerns about workers’ compensation raised in the advice and to work to implement positive changes to improve worker safety onsite. Keith said DOE conducted training sessions with senior staff onsite to acquaint them with the worker safety changes. He added that having Julianna Yamauchi, Department of Energy – Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL), as a full time employee on staff focused on Workers' Compensation has made a lot of difference.

Keith noted that a big improvement in the program is ensuring that the worker compensation claims process does not appear adversarial. Keith noted instances where people felt they had done something wrong by negatively impacting the safety record. Julianna Yamauchi has worked hard on improving these issues.

## **Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) Negotiations Workshop**

Keith asked committee members who attended the TPA Negotiations Workshop to provide their input and impressions on the workshop.

Jim Trombold said the TPA agencies (DOE, Washington State Department of Ecology [Ecology], and the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]) are talking about moving the milestone for retrieving tank waste from 2018 to 2042. He said the milestones were the topic of most discussion during the workshop. Jim said there is supposed to be a study released on single shell tank (SST) integrity. Jim said the sentiment during the workshop was that the compliance dates should not be delayed until this study is released, documenting the risks. Also, it was suggested that if compliance dates are pushed back, more funding will be necessary to build additional tanks for storage.

Jim said the handout from the workshop summarizes the issues well. He said the layout represents the best summary position from which the TPA agencies are negotiating. Karen Lutz, DOE-RL, said the questions and comments from the workshop have been posted on the website, and she can provide hard copies to interested committee members.

Keith said he felt the workshop was useful. Keith said the workshop attendees were generally concerned about moving milestones. Keith believes the Hanford Advisory Board (Board) should be realistic about milestones, such as completing the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP), because it is not unheard of to start with a date that is far out and make an effort to reduce the time it takes to complete the work. Keith was concerned that the contractor seems to be sold on bulk vitrification as the appropriate supplemental treatment technology while they are still proving the technology. Keith said at this point no one knows if bulk vitrification will work or be more expensive than beginning Low Activity Waste (LAW) treatment early.

### **Committee Discussion**

- *Has DOE abandoned the idea of in-situ treatment?* Keith said Battelle abandoned an in-situ treatment project because the tests had some serious failures. Keith felt that DOE has not defined success and failure for bulk vitrification testing, which should be done. In December, a decision is supposed to be made about whether or not to go forward with bulk vitrification. Keith believes the demonstration bulk vitrification project is costly and could delay early stabilization of the tanks. Keith said at some point in the negotiations the TPA agencies need to determine whether bulk vitrification is worth the cost.
- Jim said there was a debate during the workshop about who is the champion of the cleanup requirements. Some people said it should be EPA, while others argued it should also be Ecology.
- *Is the liquid in the tanks still being retrieved?* Keith confirmed DOE is retrieving the liquid waste. However, there are large layers of semi-solidified, non-soluble waste in the tanks. DOE has stopped using positive displacement pumps because of the recent

S-102 tank spill and plan to use centrifugal pumps, which cannot pump material as thick as the positive displacement pumps.

- *Is DOE characterizing waste as it is transferred?* Keith said DOE characterized SSTs in 1998 and they have good records on double shell tank (DST) waste so they know what types of waste is being mixed.
- *Will there be more opportunities for public input in the TPA negotiations beyond Board involvement?* Karen said DOE is hoping to get public input by November 15<sup>th</sup> so they could consider it in the next round of negotiations. Karen said a formal 30 day comment period is required for changes to the TPA. The State of the Site (SOS) meetings in November and December will focus on the negotiations.
- Committee members will review draft advice on the TPA negotiations coming from the Budgets and Contracts Committee, and determine if there is anything to add from the committee's perspective.
- *Is site infrastructure being considered in the TPA negotiations process?* If milestones are extended to 2047, then the life and integrity of existing infrastructure should be evaluated since it will need to support cleanup activities. For example, Keith noted there are water pipes that have gotten so thin some of them have burst, and several pipes run under radiation zones.

### **S-102 Tank Spill Discussion**

Jim summarized the details of the follow up report CH2M Hill (CHG) provided on the S-102 tank spill during the joint discussion between the Tank Waste Committee (TWC), River and Plateau (RAP), and HSEP. Jim said DOE explained what a Type A investigation entails and about the Board that was convened to address the spill. DOE outlined the investigation's findings and what should be done to prevent future spills. Jim said they did not discuss potentially exposed workers very much. DOE reported that 13 of the 60 people in the area during the spill reported symptoms. Jim suggested the exposed people need to be monitored because the effects of any exposure would occur over time.

Keith said DOE was monitoring the possible health effects for the known tank contaminants. The concern is that DOE did not know there was a spill and therefore did not prevent people from entering the area. Also, if the workers would have been testing for beta radiation they would have detected the spill immediately, but they had their instrument shields down so they could only detect gamma radiation.

Keith summarized some of the changes DOE is making as a result of the spill. DOE discovered that the pump being used did not have back flow prevention, so the pump inlet clogged when the pump was reversed, causing the spill. DOE is working on improving the detection, notification, and response procedure for spill events.

Jim suggested DOE needs to increase spill prevention efforts. Jim said he did not feel there was much the committee could do on this issue at this time. Keith agreed that unless new information is released regarding worker safety from the spill, this committee does not need to consider advice at this time. Jim said he would like to hear a report on the medical follow up for workers that were onsite during the spill. Jim requested that DOE provides this information in a report on the spill during the November Board meeting.

### **Discussion of issues from the tour of the Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response (HAMMER) Training and Education Center**

Keith discussed issues from the recent HAMMER tour. The HAMMER facility was forged out of the need for a good training center for people involved with handling hazardous materials. The facility involved a unique collaboration between the Tribes, unions, agencies, fire fighters, and government. For hazardous response training, HAMMER is an unprecedented facility. Keith was concerned about the funding for HAMMER, since training sessions have been cancelled due to a lack of funding.

Last spring the committee sponsored a tour of HAMMER. Keith noted two issues came up during the tour: 1) concern about the consistency in the respirator program, and 2) uniformity of safety training. During the tour staff in the respirator room had committee members try to put together different types of respirators. Because there were so many different kinds of respirators that all work differently, committee members became concerned about the cost of maintaining different kinds of respirators and the workers' ability to switch between respirator models.

Jeff Shelton, DOE-RL, explained he is new but has had the opportunity to observe the operations of Hanford contractors. He said he likes the respirator training program at HAMMER; it is well done and set up appropriately. He said he could not talk about the Department of Energy - Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP) or CHG side, but provided the DOE-RL perspective. Jeff said he has gone out and done surveillances on Washington Closure Hanford (WCH) and their subcontractors. He has also toured UniTech Services Group: a program where most of the respirator face pieces are fit, cleaned, sanitized, and examined. Jeff felt that UniTech was doing a good job overall on respirator maintenance. He said UniTech can only work on a certain type of face piece because they do not have a head form for some of the equipment a contractor could use.

Under a respiratory program a person should be medically evaluated, fit tested and trained. WCH and Fluor Hanford (FH) use HAMMER for training and use AdvanceMed Hanford (AMH) for the evaluation. DOE-RL considers whether the fit testing process meets Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements. Those standards define how the respirators should be fit and how personnel should be trained. OSHA also has requirements about field operations. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is the testing and evaluation branch that evaluates protection factors for respirators. OSHA requires NIOSH certified respirators.

Jeff said WCH and subcontractor programs were found in compliance with DOE requirements. The contractors not using HAMMER demonstrated that workers were fit tested, medically evaluated, and trained. Jeff was not sure he saw an issue with WCH and FH using different equipment because equipment will be the same for individual workers operating under one contractor. Jeff said it is important for the workers to have equipment they are familiar with and that is predictable.

Mike Schmoldt, FH, said his mission is to improve equipment quality. He said HAMMER not only provides training but also address educational objectives. Mike said HAMMER enables FH to ensure training is uniform and consistent. Equipment diversity is an issue. Some contractors are committed to certain equipment because they have used them for years. As they get into decontamination & decommissioning (D&D) there will be even more equipment needed onsite and they want their workers to have the confidence they need to use the equipment effectively.

Steve Maki, FH, worker safety representative with the Building and Construction Trades Council, said they are working with FH to standardize equipment because building trades employees move around the site to provide services under multiple contractors. They need training at HAMMER because they need to be able to use all of the equipment at all the different sites. It would be great to limit the systems and equipment used onsite. Steve said if a worker only works for one contractor then the program works well. Steve said many workers have four different face pieces and have to bring all of them when they get fit tested. Steve said this is an example of why they would like to see a consistent respirator program across the site.

Greg Perkins, FH, said DOE recognizes the need for consistency and is working on a site-wide approach to lockout/tag out while keeping in mind that contractors have their own programs. Five or six years ago, DOE created a health and safety document for radiation protection that was inserted in FH, WCH, and CHG contracts, requiring consistency between programs like posting, instruments, and training. Greg said they were contractually required to do this and as time goes on DOE will work towards this in other areas as issues arise.

Bill Taylor, DOE-ORP, said he is on a subcommittee at HAMMER that is tasked with identifying procedures that would be useful to standardize. The goal is to standardize training through procedures that workers will do anywhere onsite. Bechtel has the most building trades employees for the WTP and getting them folded into the workgroup has been an issue. WCH and FH are in a better position to benefit from a standardization program and DOE-ORP is strongly behind the initiative.

Roger Gordon, DOE-RL, said he has been involved with the bids for the Mission Support Contract (MSC) contract and one issue has been site training services and safety. Roger said the request for proposals for the contract include common safety processes, including lockout/tag-out and rigging. They are looking to the MSC to formulate common safety programs and integrate those with the new TOC and PRC contracts. They are also looking to MSC to run HAMMER and develop common training and safety

practices. Roger said DOE wants their training and processes to be consistent since workers may work at a lot of different facilities. They will need to evaluate the processes and provide recommendations for improvement. Roger said if you look at integrated safety management it is up to the contractor to make sure all of their workers have the right training even if they are a subcontractor. HAMMER will be owned by MSC and respirator and mask fits will be required to be integrated across work areas.

### **Committee Discussion**

- *Do onsite contractors have the ability to insist on a particular safety product?* Jeff explained that there are some small firms that are brought onsite for specialty work and DOE thought those firms should be able to use their own specific equipment. Jeff said that it is not in the interest of worker safety to retrain those people.
- *Part of the problem with consistency is in having multiple contractors. Why has Hanford moved towards using many different contractors whereas other sites like Oak Ridge have just one contractor?* Steve was unsure but said the contractors and DOE have done a great job at allowing workers to stop work if something is not right. If workers believe there is a problem with the equipment or the job, they can stop and get the information they need before proceeding. Steve said last year they had no recordables at the tank farms, and this year they had just one that happened in the shop, not onsite. Steve believes the contractors do a good job overall, but there is room for improvement and consistency that would help workers be better, faster and smarter. Keith felt that the safety burden should not be put entirely on the worker because they are under a lot of pressure to get work done. Steve agreed that as a worker onsite you have to prove you are knowledgeable and have a good work ethic. Steve said sometimes it is hard for an individual who is used to doing their job in an environment other than Hanford to get used to safety standards at the site.
- *Can HSEP be of help by encouraging collaboration in developing and implementing safety standards?* Steve felt that unless contractors have a mandate from DOE to work together to establish uniform equipment, standardization will not happen. Bill said the committee's endorsement of moving towards consistency has been heard. Bill said the cleanup contracts already include an emphasis on creating safety standards and it and it seems like a natural evolution at Hanford.
- *How much emphasis will DOE put on integration and standardization?* Roger said right now they are pushing for a site-wide lockout/tag-out program that includes all contractors.

### **Action Items / Commitments**

The committee discussed its work plan and topics the committee will continue to track, which includes the following issues/topics:

- Beryllium report
- Medical surveillance - radiation history
- Board Advice #118 regarding funding for HAMMER

The committee determined a November meeting is unnecessary.

Karen provided the State of the Site meeting schedule:

- November 27<sup>th</sup> in Seattle,
- November 29<sup>th</sup> in Kennewick,
- December 11<sup>th</sup> in Portland, and
- December 12<sup>th</sup> in Hood River.

**Handouts**

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

- DOE-RL response to Advice #196 – Workers Compensation, August 28, 2007.
- Draft Tri-Party Agreement Negotiations Public Workshop, October 10, 2007.
- Health, Safety and Environmental Protection Committee, FY 2008 Work Planning Table, October 17, 2007.

**Attendees**

**HAB Members and Alternates**

Mike Priddy		
Keith Smith		
Margery Swint		
Jim Trombold		

**Others**

Steve Bertness, DOE-RL	Madeleine Brown, Ecology	Jason Mulvihill-Kuntz, EnviroIssues
Roger Gordon, DOE-RL		Emily Neff, EnviroIssues
Karen Lutz, DOE-RL		Steven J Maki, FGG
Jeff Shelton, DOE-RL		Greg Perkins, FH
Lori Gamache, DOE-ORP		Michael Schmoldt, FH
Bill Taylor, DOE-ORP		Barb Wise, FH
		Peter Bengtson, WCH