

FINAL MEETING SUMMARY

**HANFORD ADVISORY BOARD
HEALTH, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE
March 11, 2004
Richland, Washington**

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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

Committee chair Keith Smith welcomed the committee and introductions were made. He briefly reviewed the goals and agenda for the meeting.

Former Worker Monitoring Program

Issue manager Jim Trombold introduced discussion of the discontinuation of the former worker monitoring program. The intent of this program is to study the medical issues workers at Department of Energy (DOE) sites have developed as a result of their exposure to chemicals and radiation. This program is an important tool in recognizing and respecting the contribution that these workers made to the Cold War. Through the interviews done as part of this program, the stories of many people have been shared. Some of these were very valid medical concerns and those individuals were included as part of the on-going surveillance program.

There are two separate programs, one for building trades construction workers and one for production and non-construction workers. The University of Washington Occupational Medicine program conducts the exams for the later program. Up to this point, 54,000 workers have been identified to receive these exams and 5,000 have expressed an interest in participating. To date, 1600 exams have been conducted and there are 3,000 workers who desire or need additional exams. There has been some difficulty in locating former workers who have had significant exposure.

The surveillance conducted is not as simple as completing a physical exam. As technology and knowledge change and improve, re-testing becomes necessary.

The original intent was to have a surveillance program operating at all sites; it is important that there is a medical program that provides, consistent, uniform, and adequate surveillance for workers at every site.

Jim pointed out that through these exams, much can be gained, for example, increased industrial health/safety knowledge. The discontinuation of this program is a loss to occupational medical science.

The Committee has asked DOE to clarify that the surveillance and screening of Hanford workers as part of the Federal Compensation program will be de-funded on July 30, 2004. Jean Schwier, DOE -Richland Operations Office(DOE-RL), offered to gather information for the committee about this issue.

Committee Discussion

- Tim Takaro explained that the committee received a memo indicating that, in order to expand this program to smaller sites, it must be discontinued at Hanford. Jean asked if this could be because the site no longer needs it. Tim stated the cynical view would be the program was ended because it *is* needed: the program has resulted in an increase of claims, increasing the strain on the compensation system. At the same time, there is pressure on the contractors to reduce the worker compensation cost. Tim noted that because general practitioners are not looking for occupational health problems, the specific work related surveillance program exams are vital.
- Jim asked if the contractors are penalized for the number of claims filed. Jean replied they are not. Jean was adamant that DOE in no way wants people to refrain from filing valid claims. Keith Smith added that contractors are only penalized if their management provides unsafe conditions.
- Jean suggested “Compensation 101” be on the next committee agenda to help the committee understand the compensation and insurance processes. .
- Harold Heacock asked if the workers compensation program is bottlenecked. Keith stated this is a common problem, because with the exception of beryllium and cancer claims, all claims are processed by the state.
- Norm Dyer asked if this federally compensated program was developed as a precursor for the compensation program as opposed to the state workers’ compensation program. Tim stated it was developed because for many claims around the country, there was no willing payer, especially in non beryllium/non-cancer cases.

Regulator Perspectives

- Debra McBaugh, Washington State Department of Health (WDOH), stated she will include this issue in her monthly report, which goes to the head of the department. Even though this is not a radiological issue, it is one that should interest the whole department.

Recent Developments in Site Safety Oversight

Washington State Investigation into Tank Vapors

Jane Hedges, Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), explained that last October, the State Attorney General sent a letter to DOE requesting an independent evaluation of tank vapors based on concerns raised in a report by the Government Accountability Project (GAP). No response was received to that letter. The State requested that Ecology and WDOH review the situation and determine if the allegations were plausible. After an initial investigation, it was determined that the investigative agency should be federal, not state. Representatives from the state are meeting with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) investigators who are visiting the site, to share the State's issues and questions. This will assist NIOSH in framing their investigation. Jane anticipates the release of the NIOSH report within the next few weeks.

Greg Jones, DOE -Office of River Protection (DOE-ORP), asserted this issue is being taken very seriously. Many processes, such as revised schedules and chemical awareness training programs, are being developed to address the issue.

A series of corrective actions was put in place to ensure the workers are not at risk. DOE's Office of Independent Oversight will be visiting to review tank farm improvements as well as the issues that have been raised at the Hanford Environmental Health Foundation (HEHF). The review period will take two weeks. As results are received, they will be shared with this committee. Review teams will try to provide recommendations for improvement of processes. One such suggestion was to develop an As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) concept for the chemical and vapor environment. ALARA has previously only been used in the radiological environment.

Regulator Perspective

- John Martell, WDOH, stated they are putting a report together to look at the radiological absorbed dose (RAD) side of vapors. He noted CH2MHill Hanford Group (CHG) and DOE-ORP have been very helpful in providing information.

Committee Discussion

- Greg acknowledged that the State of the Site meeting in Richland brought many issues of worker safety to the forefront. The process of bidding for and the awarding of new contracts will be used to re-emphasize safety issues with the contractors.
- Todd Martin asked who at DOE-ORP is supporting these investigations and reviews. Greg responded it is part of everyone's "other duties as described."
- Greg remarked that DOE-ORP has been working closely on this issue with the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council (HAMTC) safety representatives. He added

that the NIOSH professionals will be available to talk with workers at a variety of venues, including the labor union hall, to promote unfettered dialogue.

- Tim asked if workers who request supplied air now receive it. Joel replied that a suite of options is available but supplied air is not one of those, because there are indications that disadvantages such as weight and sight lines outweigh the benefits. Using a self Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) can result in issues with tripping, encumbrance, and overheating. Tim asserted that in terms of comfort and visibility, the powered air-purifying respirator (PAPR) is a good option, but for uncharacterized environments, supplied air is the standard. He asked if these environments are characterized. Greg stated monitoring is being conducted in the breathing zones and DOE believe they understand what is coming out of the vents and is found in the head space.
- Norm asked if the half-face mask is adequate for vapors. Joel replied that these are offered as a convenience and must be fitted before use. When protection is prescribed for chemical hazards that could be found in the airspace, the industrial standard is used, not the half-face mask.
- Jim asked what the major constituents of the vapors are. Joel stated that a total of 1200 total chemicals have been identified to exist in the 177 tanks. 767 of these chemicals are potentially volatile chemicals that are found in reasonable concentrations. 17 of these chemicals are found in tanks exceeding some threshold or industry standard of concern based on a time weighted average. Only three of these have been found to exist outside the tank. The instruments used to monitor these chemicals are sensitive beyond the legal limits. The 17 chemicals in the tank headspace and those outside the tanks are closely monitored.
- Tim asked Greg to comment on the 1997 Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) report on tank C103. Greg replied that report was never issued because of flaws in the assumptions used. A Harvard School of Public Health review concurred the report was flawed. Greg will provide the Harvard report to the committee.
- Several committee members agreed that the use of an ALARA concept for vapors and chemicals would be a good step, as it is a concept Hanford workers would understand.
- Tim asked about the results from the previous independent review panel. He understood from the paper that this panel did not reach a consensus and was disbanded. Greg replied that four independent reports were received from the members of the panel because they could not agree on a combined report. The team also sent a consolidated report with recommendations. CHG put all the recommendations and issues into a matrix that is now publicly available. Joel Eacker, CHG, stated the next step is to look at the recommendations and begin to implement those as quickly as possible.

DOE investigation into HEHF

Steve Wisness, DOE-RL, explained there are several reviews occurring. One aspect of the tank farm vapor issues that rose to the top was with the occupational health service provider. When employee concerns with the program were brought to management's attention, the concerns were referred to HEHF to investigate. Both he and the public health service looked at those responses and launched their own investigation to substantiate their review of the HEHF response. This has included a field investigation. The review team includes a facility representative, public health doctor, record manger, national archives representative, and the overseers of the HEHF contract.

The Office of Independent Oversight is also investigating HEHF. They are currently developing lines of inquiry and scoping the investigation. The team will be back to talk with individuals from the contractor shop. Their report is due by April 19, 2004. After the report is reviewed, it will be delivered to DOE-Headquarters, and then be distributed to the public.

Regulator Perspectives

- John stated WDOH medical investigation board personnel are looking at specific concerns identified in the GAP report on vapor issues. They are attempting to determine if the doctors involved were working within their licenses.

Committee Discussion

- Jim asked what questions the review team is being directed to ask, and what the team's assignment is. Steve replied the goal is to look at HEHF policies and procedures in relation to occupational health. The team will also review how cases are managed, how work restrictions are implemented, and how records are kept. This review will look at HEHF across the board but will focus on tank vapors.

Committee Goals for 2004

The committee discussed their work plan and the scope and goals of the committee.

- Jim stated that the work plan is a good guideline; however, it is more imperative to increase the involvement of other Board members in this committee.
- Norm commented that for health and safety, it is important for workers and management to be cognizant in their own responsibilities. There are technical and advisory issues that a health and safety committee can provide but it is the responsibility of the technical committees to provide advice. Norm asserted the responsibility of this committee is to provide the program assistance for the technical committees. Debra noted health and safety issues are frequently addressed in River

and Plateau Committee meetings. However, she is concerned that because the other committees are very busy, the health and safety issues may take a back seat.

- Keith acknowledged it is important for this committee to have its members on other committees to ensure that health and safety issues are brought up in those committees.
- Tim said he does not believe the technical committees can provide the function of this committee. He agreed that it is difficult for other committees to get into the nitty gritty of these issues.
- Todd commended Keith for applying the results of the last two leadership retreats to this committee and noted this discussion is assuming the structure of the other committees will remain the same. There are several issues the committee chairs will have to address at the upcoming leadership retreat. One is that the regulators no longer have the staff or the time to service all the committee meetings, in particular the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Secondly, there is an inherent cost in maintaining the committee infrastructure of calls, etc. Many Board members have commented they would like to spend time on substantive work and not committee calls. Third, the way issues get brought to the Board's attention is that someone, either an individual or committee, carries it forward. It is important for this committee to refocus its work scope. The current work-planning chart is filled with monitoring functions instead of decision points and products. Based on the State of the Site meetings, today's presentations, and the investigations currently in progress or planned, there is a significant amount of work. This committee must determine if there is a role for the Board in those issues. In the past, the Board has been effective at mediating and getting to the root of issues on the site. He would like the Board to be at a point where they are recommending some level of resolution between the parties, since it seems that DOE-ORP and its workers are currently moving towards different places.
- Jim asked if the only way to show the committee is effective is to bring advice to the Board. Todd replied the Board has a keen interest in ensuring there is a satisfactory resolution to the numerous investigations that will be completed in the next few months. The current worker issues is cut across all areas of the site. It would be very difficult for a technical committee to have a meeting and not talk about these issues, but in order to focus, it is important to develop a scope of work and then follow it.
- Jim asked Todd if he envisions the HSEP committee merging with another committee. Todd clarified that he is not trying to interfere with the committee's business but rather trying to provide some data input. He does not want the committee to feel bound by its relationships with other committees. The leadership retreat is coming up and this is a good time to begin thinking outside the box.
- Keith stated he is concerned about the perception of not having a HSEP committee. When this has been suggested in the past, the workers, especially the unions, expressed it was very important to have this committee.
- Harold stated the committee must be careful to avoid issues of litigation, contract procurement, investigations, etc. which are not policy issues. The committee and Board hurt their credibility by trying to break into some of those. Todd agreed that

this issue is dicier than others. However, he noted the Board would be remiss if it didn't take up the issues of the workers at the policy level.

- Todd explained that his job is to ensure the money is being spent effectively. As long as meetings and conference calls are effective, those can be defended to DOE. The difficulty comes when the agency says they don't need advice and the issue is not important. However, he stated that he never defends committee meetings based on advice but rather on the discussion. In many cases the agencies find discussion more useful than advice.

Committee members agreed to develop the committee's scope over the next few weeks and continue the discussion on the March and April committee calls.

Handouts

- Health, Safety, and Environmental Protection Committee Meeting Agenda, March 11, 2004.

Attendees

HAB Members and Alternates

Norm Dyer	Todd Martin	Keith Smith
Harold Heacock	Debra McBaugh	Tim Takaro, (by phone)
John Martell	Mike Priddy	Jim Trombold

Others

Jean Schwier, DOE-RL	Michelle Anderson-Moore, Ecology (by phone)	Joel Eacker, CHG
Yvonne Sherman, DOE-RL	Jane Hedges, Ecology (by phone)	Bryan Kidder, CHG
Steve Wisness, DOE-RL		Liana Herron, EnviroIssues
Greg Jones, DOE-ORP		Lynn Lefkoff, EnviroIssues
		Barb Wise, Fluor
		Kim Ballinger, Nuvotec
		Annette Cary, TC-Herald