



May 6, 2014

Dorothy Riehle
FOIA Office
U.S. Department of Energy
P. O. Box 550
Richland, WA 99352

Re: FOIA Request/Chemical Vapor FOIA

Dear Ms. Riehle:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552) ("FOIA"), Hanford Challenge requests a copy of the following agency records:

1. Any and all records related to or generated in connection with a contract involving Savannah River National Lab and any Hanford contractor, including but not limited to Washington River Protection Solutions, Inc. (WRPS) and/or the Department of Energy (DOE), concerning or related to the issue of chemical vapors at the Hanford site in 2014. I have attached a Press Release from the Savannah River National Lab to assist you in identifying records responsive to this request.
2. Any and all correspondence, directives, e-mails, texts and/or memoranda generated by personnel within the DOE's Office of River Protection that are related in any way to chemical vapor exposures, dated from March 1, 2014 to the present date.
3. Any and all Problem Evaluation Requests (PERs) related to or generated in connection with chemical vapor incidents occurring at the Hanford site from January, 2010 to the present time.
4. Any and all memoranda and/or reports relating to or generated in connection with incidents where employees were sent or reported for medical evaluation due to alleged vapor exposures, (to include reports of smells or odors), at the Hanford site dated from January 1, 2010 to the present.

I specifically request that you undertake a search of all offices that may be in possession or control of these records at any location where responsive records might reasonably be found, including but not limited to contractor records.

The term "records" as used in this request is intended to cover documents and data whether maintained in paper, digital or electronic formats and stored on media such as hard drives, smart phones, tape drives or other such formats.

I request that you provide the response to this information in a digital format, either by providing me an internet link to the responsive documents, or on a CD or DVD drive.

If any records covered by this request have been destroyed and/or removed, or are destroyed and/or removed after receipt of this request, please provide all surrounding records, including but not limited to a list of all records which have been destroyed and/or removed, a description of the actions taken, relevant dates, and individual, office and/or agency-wide policies and/or justifications for the action(s).

I hereby request that all fees, if any, be waived. This information is in the public interest, and its dissemination will lead to a greater understanding of the operations of these government facilities. Hanford Challenge is not requesting the information for any private or commercial purpose and is a non-profit, public interest organization designated as a tax exempt entity under IRS code 501(c)(3). You have our IRS letter of exemption, but I am happy to provide you with another copy upon request.

This fee waiver request is based upon 5 USC 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II), which provides for fee waivers or reductions "if disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." See, Center for Biological Diversity v. OMB, 546 F.Supp. 2d 722 (N.D. Cal. 2008).

Our interest in the disclosure of these records is for public education, advocacy for public interest goals, and a more responsive and accountable government that promotes environmental protection and protection of human health and safety. Our investigations are disseminated through our website as well as our newsletters, and often reported in the news media. In addition, we publish special reports and meet with public officials, workers, and the public at large to educate and promote solutions for issues affecting human and environmental health and safety around the Hanford Site. Hanford Challenge is a member or, and participant in the Hanford Advisory Board, which advises the US Department of Energy, the EPA and the State of Washington, on cleanup issues related to the Hanford Nuclear Site. Hanford Challenge is also a founding and participating member in the Hanford Concerns Council, which resolves significant employee concerns at the Hanford Site.

Hanford Challenge works with members of the Hanford Site work force on issues affecting worker and public health and safety, environmental concerns, and site management issues. We monitor internal systems in effect at Hanford for addressing worker issues, including employee concerns, compensation and medical care and treatment issues.

Below is an analysis using agency criteria for a fee waiver:

1. subject matter of the requested records must specifically concern identifiable "operations or activities of the government." A request concerning only the information content of a record and without relation to government operations or activities does not satisfy this factor.

This criteria is clearly met. We seek records in the possession and control of the Department of Energy (DOE), a Cabinet-level federal agency of the United States government, and its contractors. The DOE owns and contracts out operations of the Hanford Site, which currently

represents the largest and most contaminated facility in the United States. The federal government provides an average of \$2 billion of taxpayer money to operate the Hanford Site and pay for a cleanup of the vast inventories of radioactive, chemical and toxic waste stored there.

2. Whether the requested information “is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to the public understanding of the operations of activities of the government.”

The release of the requested information is in the public interest and is likely to contribute significantly to the public understanding of the operations of the government because these types of records reveal the activities at the Hanford Site. Information regarding the incidents at Hanford involving exposures of workers to chemical vapors has been the subject of media scrutiny and significant public concern. The response of site managers to these incidents will contribute significantly to the public’s understanding of how workers are being protected, the site response to vapor exposures, and the government and contractor’s activities related to providing protection for workers. Further, the issue of chemical vapor exposures has a long history that stretches back to the late 1980’s, and has been the focus of Congressional, media, contractor and DOE scrutiny on many occasions.

3. The requested records must be meaningfully informative in relation to the subject matter of the request and should not already be in the public domain.

The requested records relate to the subject of our request, and are not currently in the public domain, to our knowledge.

4. Disclosure of the information “is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.”

- (A) The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest: Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure;

There is no commercial interest associated with our request. Hanford Challenge is a non-profit organization chartered under a 501(c)(3) designation in the IRS Code.

- (B) The primary interest in disclosure: Whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large, in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is "primarily in the commercial interest of the requester."

The primary, and only interests in the disclosure of these records are for public education, advocacy for public interest goals, and the reform of the government for a more responsive and accountable government.

Hanford Challenge is uniquely situated to analyze and publish reports about the subject matter of this request. Our staff has many years of experience related to Hanford oversight, and has unique expertise regarding environmental, safety and health issues associated with nuclear sites. This is especially true in the matter of chemical vapor exposure, where our staff has published

reports on the matter, spoken with workers, and participated in past studies of the vapor exposure issue.

We maintain an expansive and regularly updated website (hanfordchallenge.org) which is viewed by tens of thousands of visitors annually, and we publish a quarterly newsletter which is distributed by mail, at meetings, and on the website. We conduct or participate in monthly public forums and meetings, and our staff members often appear on talk shows, in interviews, and at public events.

For the above-stated reasons, Hanford Challenge requests a fee waiver in this matter. I look forward to a response to this request within twenty working days of the receipt of this letter. If you have any questions, I am available at the address listed above.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Carpenter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Carpenter, Executive Director