

August 4, 2008

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am providing the enclosed report entitled, "Review of the U.S. Department of Energy's Regulatory Processes for the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant." Congress directed the NRC to conduct this review and report its assessment and recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in the report accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2008.

The report describes in detail: (1) how the NRC conducted its review; (2) interactions with Federal, State, and Tribal organizations, and the public, during this process; (3) the NRC's high-level review of the Department of Energy's (DOE) regulatory processes for the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP); and (4) recommendations.

The report also responds to a letter dated May 2, 2008, from Chairman Visclosky and Representative Hobson of the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development. This letter recommended that the NRC assess DOE's processes to ensure that the items previously identified by the NRC in its earlier Hanford Tank Waste Remediation System-Privatization closeout report (NUREG-1747) are addressed in a timely and responsible fashion and include an update on the resolution of any of these items.

Several specific safety and regulatory issues were identified during staff visits to the WTP site, discussions with DOE personnel, and reviews of WTP documentation. These issues are provided in Appendix B of the report. While NRC staff considered these issues during their review, a detailed study was not performed because these issues fell outside the scope and intent of this review. As of the completion of this review, these issues had not yet been resolved. We believe our observations may assist you in your continued oversight of the WTP project.

- 2 -

DOE fully cooperated in this review and reviewed portions of a draft report for factual accuracy. However, DOE did *not* review NRC's conclusions and recommendations. Thank you for the Department's cooperation and support of NRC's review.

If you have questions regarding this report, please contact the Chairman's office at 301-415-1759.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Kristine L. Svinicki
Acting Chairman

Enclosure: As stated

cc: James A. Rispoli, DOE

Similar letter sent to:

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative David L. Hobson

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator Pete V. Domenici

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585
cc: James A. Rispoli, DOE