

Savannah River Site

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November 16, 2005

Mr. Jeff Allison, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
Aiken, S.C. 29808

Subject: Salt Waste Processing Facility Re-design Delays

Dear Mr. Allison:

Based upon the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) status presentation by DOE to the Waste Management Committee on November 1, 2005, we have concerns about the confinement system re-design issues between the Department and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB). The Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation #212 (May 24, 2005) requested that DOE-SR and the DNFSB work together to expeditiously resolve the re-design issues based upon technical merit, risk impact to the overall SRS waste management system, and cost benefit analysis of various options. We also asked that DOE-SR provide an estimate of the relative risks of postponing the treatment of high-level wastes (HLW) in SWPF to meet the re-design objectives and leaving the wastes in 50-year old tanks compared with the risks of not upgrading the design of SWPF.


In your response, you stated that you were optimistic that a solution would be reached in an expeditious manner. Furthermore, you stated that a more detailed risk-benefit analysis was being performed that addresses potential delays in the treatment of HLW at SRS. To date, we have not received a briefing on the risk-benefit analysis, probably because resolution of the SWPF re-design is undecided.


We are concerned with the lack of follow-up action related to the commitments made in response to Recommendation #212. This has been under consideration for approximately a year now. Please address this concern by December 2005 and provide the Board the most accurate representation of the costs (including FY06 budget and expected expenditures), schedule, and other significant factors affecting your decision.

We understand that if a total re-design of SWPF is required then the SWPF design/construct project could experience as much as a three-year delay. Furthermore, we are concerned about the impact the delay will have on the regulatory process by SCDHEC. All of these issues could result in the shutdown of DWPF. This is the one thing the CAB has worked hard to keep operating in order to safely encapsulate the HLW. We are not comfortable with the possible delay or the potential costs and risks associated with any such delay.

In January 2006, the Waste Management Committee plans on issuing a follow-up recommendation concerning the SWPF re-design delays. It appears to the CAB that any incremental safety benefit associated with re-designing SWPF may not be worth the impacts to the HLW system. Due to the serious nature of this issue, we want to keep you informed of our plan of action.

Sincerely,


Ms. Jean Sulc
Chairman
24 Harbor River Circle
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Mr. Robert Meisenheimer
WM Committee Chair
46 Haul Away Road
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cc: James A. Rispoli, DOE-HQ
A.J. Eggenberger, DNFSB