



Department of Energy
Albuquerque Operations Office
Los Alamos Area Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

OCT 10 1997

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Mr. Benito Garcia, Bureau Chief
Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2044 Galisteo St., Building A
P. O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87505



Dear Mr. Garcia:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a written report notifying you of an emergency chemical destruction at Technical Area (TA) 49, on Wednesday, October 8, 1997. Approval to perform this activity was provided by Steve Zappe of your staff to Alice Barr of Los Alamos National Laboratory's (LANL) Hazardous and Solid Waste Group (ESH-19), via telephone on Friday, October 3, 1997.

During waste management operations at TA-46, Building 75, a small compressed gas cylinder containing approximately 3-4 grams of methyl nitrite was identified which could not be safely transported and handled as part of LANL's regular waste operations. Methyl nitrite has been designated as a forbidden hazard class for shipping according to Department of Transportation regulations. The Material Safety Data Sheets for the gas indicated that it might have been shock sensitive and unstable. It was consequently considered a potential threat to human health and safety and the Hazardous Devices Team (HDT) and Hazardous Material Response Team (HAZMAT) were contacted to assist in management of the chemical. It was determined that since the chemical should be presumed reactive, an emergency chemical destruction was required.

The container was moved to TA-49 by the HDT. Air modeling calculations performed by the Environmental, Safety and Health, Group 17 personnel determined that the planned release of the material generated during the operation would not result in significant toxic gas concentrations at public access points. Safe standoff distances for the chemical destruction personnel were calculated and observed.

Destruction of the substance and container was completed at 10:40 a.m. on October 8, 1997. After the destruction process was completed, an inspection of the surrounding area revealed no unusual occurrences. There was no residue in the cylinder due to the pyrolytic effect of the shaped charge used to open the cylinder and destroy the gaseous contents.



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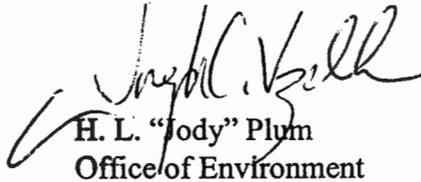
Benito Garcia

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10/11/1997

If you have any questions, please call me at (505) 665-5042.

Sincerely,



H. L. "Jody" Plum
Office of Environment

LAAMEP:6JP-041

cc:

S. Dinwiddie

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