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

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SEP 2 1992



Mr. Ed Horst, Program Manager
Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
525 Camino de los Marquez Place
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Mr. Horst:

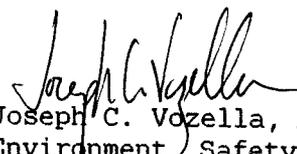
The purpose of this letter is to confirm a conversation you had with Jon Mack of my staff on August 11, 1992, regarding the observation of corroded and punctured drums by a newspaper reporter at the Los Alamos National Laboratory's (LANL) Technical Area 54, Area G, Building 49, Mixed Waste Storage Facility, and to provide you with some follow-up information.

Regarding the corroded drums, "blistering" (bubbles of water under the drum's paint) was first observed on June 1, 1991, on the surface of several drums containing low level radioactive and lead-contaminated waste. First indications were that this was a manufacturing defect in the drums. Subsequent investigations and monitoring have generally supported this initial observation. LANL is, however, continuing to investigate other possibilities. Monitoring results of the surface of the drums and the surrounding area and analysis of the corroded material has indicated that no hazardous wastes have been released from the drums. The internal condition of selected drums will be examined, and as a precaution, all 48 drums of this wastestream will be "overpacked."

Two additional drums containing "lead brick/shot and dirt" and low level contaminated lead from decontamination and decommissioning activities were observed to have puncture holes. LANL has already determined that no contaminated material was discharged from these drums. These two drums have already been overpacked.

I hope this information sufficiently addresses any questions you may have. If not, please call me at 667-5288 or Jon Mack of my staff at 665-5026.

Sincerely,


Joseph C. Vozella, Acting Chief
Environment Safety, & Health
Branch

LESH:1JM-073

cc:
Robert King, FOB, LAAO
Tony Drypolcher, EM-7, LANL, MS E517



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