SNL MWL 06

/o=State of New Mexico/ou=First Administrative Group/cn=Recipients/cn=john.kieling

From: gloria weisberg [glo@texoma.net]
Sent: Sunday, February 05, 2006 7:48 PM
To: Kieling, John, NMENV; Sue Dayton
Subject: Cover-up Plans for MWL
Attachments: cover-up.doc

Maurice A. Weisberg, M.D.

1677 Cerro Gordo Rd.

Santa Fe, NM 87501

To: John Kieling

Cover-up Plans for MWL

From its very onset, the AEC and DOE have been moving forward in what passes for its basic political vision, which will become a nightmare for communities and the environment. The goal is for the DOE to obtain variances for current environmental laws and obligations and walk away from doing actual, complete clean-up of its nuclear legacy.

What is going on is direct suppression and misrepresentation of the science. The DOE sees a result they want to achieve and they skew the data to get there.

The protection of the integrity of our aquifers is a matter of urgent national security, not only involving public health, but also the economic stability of the community.

The National Academy of Science in 2000 reported that most of the nuclear bomb sites will never be cleaned up enough to allow public access to the land and the plan for guarding these sites cannot guarantee the safety of the public. "At many sites the wastes will remain, posing risks to humans and the environment for hundreds of thousands of years. Complete elimination of unacceptable risks to humans will not be achieved now or in the foreseeable future." Even if the government declared certain areas permanently off-limits, it does not have the technology, money, or political will to prevent spread of the contamination. Some of the contaminants are already off-site and others will follow.

Biotransport of radioactive contaminants is likely to occur over time and increasingly over the long term (Hakonson). Another critic of the mythical "cap and cover" farce is Dr. Peter Montague, director of Rachel's

Environment and Health Weekly, who indicated 5 or 6 reasons why dirt caps and vegetative covers fail. Among the problems are deep root systems extending as much as 20-30 feet below the surface; burrowing rodents and insects, erosions and cave-ins due to wastes and drums and debris collapsing.

Mr. Dick Fate of SNL believed there was so little risk that he referred to the capping of the MWL as an "elegant solution." This tribute to Sandia's science sounds like George Busch's congratulations of Brown at FEMA as a "heckava job" for Hurricane Katrina relief. It is well known that all dumps leak in wet or dry areas, especially if they are unlined and in porous or sandy soils.

Dick Fate at SNL objected that there are some materials in the site like radium, beryllium and cobalt, that if brought to the surface, would be unable to be moved to another site. But, Dr. Eric Nuttalt said he thinks, "Sandia could move all the waste if they put their minds to it."

At the rate tritium is moving laterally and deeply through the soil, we could expect contamination of the aquifer in less than ten years. TCE has reached the aquifer in area "V" at the liquid disposal area. At LANL, tritium is present in the drinking water and together with perchlorate and high explosive chemicals exist in springs that emanate from beneath LANL and feed the Rio Grande.

Such findings at LANL support the need for clean-up of waste sites that threaten ground water. This comparable situation at MWL demands the excavation of all mixed wastes buried in unlined, unregulated, and unpermitted pits and trenches to be stored in hardened facilities above ground.

Some of the SNL spokespeople have made unsubstantiated, erroneous, and blatantly false statements in public hearings that radioactive materials would not move through the vadose zone any further. Large quantities of liquid wastes were dumped into MWL before another facility was opened. Torrential rains do occur in the region. Dr. Arjun Makhijani of IEER (The Institute of Energy and Environmental Research) states that movement of nuclear debris through soil is much more rapid than the DOE and the nuclear labs have maintained. One of his charts shows the remarkable changes in estimates of travel time of Plutonium through the vados zone to the Snake river aquifer from 80 thousand years in 1965 to 30 years in 1997. Contaminants like Sr-90, tritium, and TCE move rapidly in plumes. Plutonium shows different rates of migration depending on local geologic conditions and probably takes preferred pathways as Canadian hydrogeologists have shown. It is Makhijani's contention that the DOE and its contractors have proved unable to carry out a sound clean-up program because they lack strict criteria for expertise and experience relevant to the specific job, as well as accountability and openness.

It would be prudent to follow the advice of the Idaho trout farmer, Why would you put your outhouse over your main source of water?

Sandia has had problems with other landfills leaching wastes into ground water as in the case of the Chemical Waste Landfill and the Liquid Waste Disposal Area adjacent to the research reactors. TCE, a carcinogen, was present in both areas, and drinking water fountains are within a mile of this facility.

A 1989 FOIA document stated that elevated concentrations of Tritium were found in vegetation 5 km from the landfill.

Liquids were dumped freely into MWL up until 1972, before the Chemical Waste Landfill was constructed.

J.M. Gould, in his book on Nuclear Power (*The Enemy Within*), states that radiation makes chemicals doubly carcinogenic. Rachel Carson first pointed this out in her book *Silent Spring.*

Bear VII documents that there is no safe dose of radiation. It is a basic scientific fact that all levels of radiation are potentially harmful and damage the genetic material of generations to come.

Dr. Arjun Makhijani of IEER has been urging the DOE to concentrate its energy on excavating buried nuclear waste sites as a priority for shipment to a suitable, safe repository rather than dealing with wastes that are stored above ground. Obviously, this has been to no avail. Officials at the DOE were more concerned with fulfilling antiquated regulations than with developing a workable plan to deal with the threat of buried wastes perched above at-risk aquifers in major cities in primitive, unlined pits and trenches. This is a real axis of evil. This idée fixe of the DOE/ Sandia group is indeed a scientific sham and shame. How often will the DOE continue to proclaim, "Trust us, it will never happen on our watch."? A vital decision for the MWL should involve more than quantitative and engineering factors. It must not put this city's vital resources in jeopardy.

Respectfully,

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