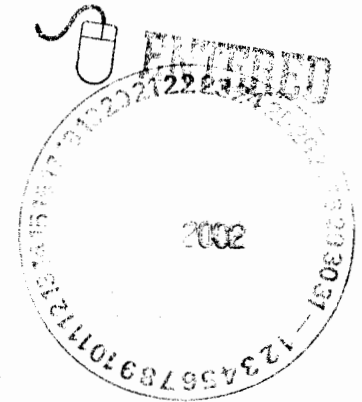




Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
P. O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

May 20, 2002



Mr. Frank Marcinowski
Office of Radiation and Indoor Air
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M. Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Marcinowski:

This purpose of this letter is to inform the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of our plan to mine a ventilation overcast in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant underground. The overcast will be constructed at the intersection of S-3080 (Panel 3 access drift) and E-300 (the exhaust drift). This mining is planned during construction of the Panel 3 access drifts, currently scheduled in the February 2003 timeframe.

These overcasts are routinely used where the access (intake) drift of a panel crosses E-300 (exhaust) in order to prevent mixing of disposal circuit intake air with the exhaust air-stream. Each overcast involves a small excavation above the access drift to contain exhaust ductwork. In the case of Panels 1 and 2, the ventilation overcast excavation extended up to or near Clay Seam G. For Panels 3 and 4, which have the roof at Clay Seam G, it is planned to excavate up to or near Clay Seam H for the overcast. These overcasts are quite short, with a typical excavated length of approximately 60 feet to accommodate the overcast and allow for a smooth airflow transition (see enclosed).

As part of our routine ground control program, we have found it desirable to excavate the roof up to and including Clay Seam G. This provides the most stable conditions. We provided a discussion and photographs of such ground control mining up to Clay Seam G in E-140 between S-1950 and S-2580 at our June 28-29, 2000 meeting.

This configuration provides good ground conditions and adequate ventilation for the protection of workers. We believe this change is insignificant in terms of long-term performance. Moreover, it involves a level of detail of repository geometry that is too fine to be effectively incorporated in the models used in Performance Assessment (PA) or to influence the results from PA.

We will incorporate the mining of the ventilation overcasts in the upcoming Annual Change Report. If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Mr. Daryl Mercer at (505) 234-7452.

Sincerely,

Dr. Inés R. Triay
Manager



Mr. Frank Marcinowski

-2-

Enclosure

cc: w/enclosure

L. Smith, HQ

B. Lilly, CBFO

C. Zvonar, CBFO

E. Rose, CBFO

J. Plum, CBFO

D. Mercer, CBFO

B. Forinash, EPA-ORIA

C. Byrum, EPA, Region VI

N. Stone, EPA, Region VI

J. Bearzi, NMED

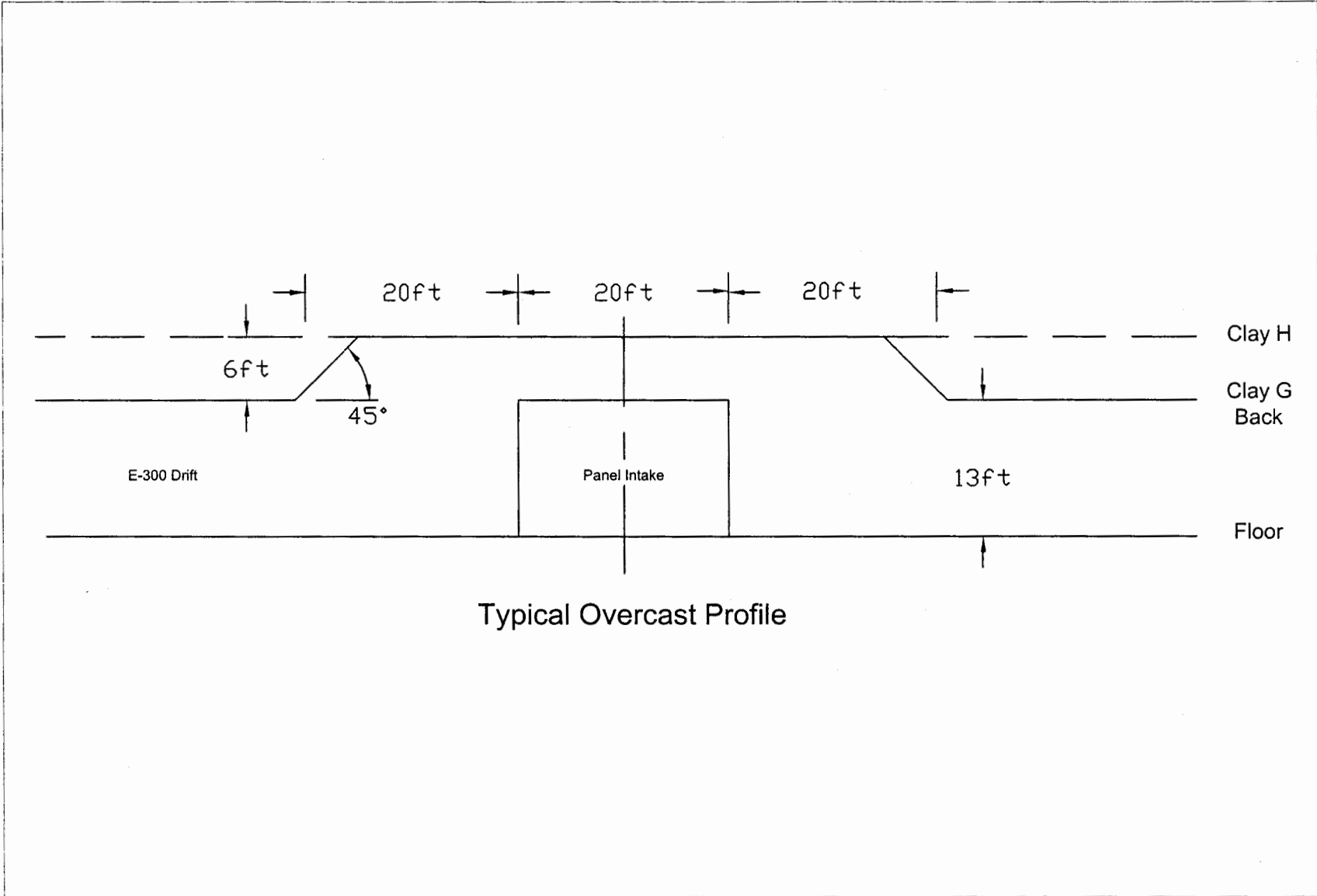
S. Zappe, NMED

M. Silva, EEG

J. Lee, WTS

S. Kouba, WTS

P. Shoemaker, SNL



Typical Overcast Profile