

7857

G-000-1013.163

**LETTER FROM JOHN APPLGATE TO JACK CRAIG CONCERNING
RADIUM, SILO 3, AND THE FREQUENCY OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

10/05/96

APPLGATE CRAIG
2
LETTER



October 5, 1996

Mr. Jack Craig
DOE - FEMP
P.O. Box 398705
Cincinnati, OH 45239

CHAIR
John S. Applegate

MEMBERS
James C. Bierer
Marvin W. Clawson
Lisa Crawford
Pamela Dunn
Constance Fox, M.D.
Guy C. Guckenberger
Darryl D. Huif
Gloria J. McKinley
Jerry Monahan
Thomas B. Rentschler
Robert G. Tabor
Warren E. Strunk
Dr. Thomas E. Wagner
Dr. Gene E. Willeke

EX OFFICIO
L. French Bell
J. Phillip Hamric
Gene Jablonowski
Graham Mitchell

Dear Jack:

This letter reflects what I took to be the sense of the Task Force on three of the issues that we discussed on Saturday: radium, Silo 3, and the frequency of future meetings.

First, as you heard, Task Force members are concerned both that potential radium extraction not delay or divert funds from cleanup of the K-65 silos. On the other hand, they are concerned that a medically invaluable opportunity not be lost. This dilemma, which I think is widely shared, seems to me to have three operational implications: (1) DOE and the Task Force need to identify the points at which irretrievable commitments are made (e.g., actual vitrification of substantial amounts of radium-bearing materials, deep burial of vitrified materials); (2) DOE needs to open some line of communication with the Sloan Kettering investigation team, so that we can find out promptly when, if ever, their studies yield results that might justify preserving the radium; and (3) some initial steps should be taken toward studying the feasibility of removing radium from vitrified K-65 material, an issue about which expert opinion currently seems divided. The Task Force first identified this need in an October 11, 1995 letter to Secretary O'Leary and Assistant Secretary Grumbly. Specifically, we expressed our concern that "without a clear understanding of whether we can extract radium from vitrified material, we will most certainly face serious controversy about continuing to vitrify this material, if (as expected) the clinical results are positive. There are also bound to be further delays and mistakes as we are forced to rush through studies to bring our knowledge up to the level necessary to make reasoned decisions. While we are aware of the budget constraints DOE is facing, funding inexpensive literature studies of the feasibility of pre- and post-vitrification extraction will go a long way to prepare the Department to act as soon as the results of clinical trials are available." This concern is even more relevant one year later as no action has been taken on this important evaluation.

Second, the Task Force was not prepared to approve at this time the use of solidification for Silo 3, instead of the vitrification currently specified by the OU4 ROD. The reluctance, as I heard it, was based on four concerns: (1) despite its apparent promise, the cementation process has a mixed track record (previous assurances about the feasibility of vitrification have not increased confidence in this regard); (2) there are important interactions between the Silo 3 and Silos 1 & 2 decisions, and the latter cannot be made until about March 1997; (3) the wisdom of building additional infrastructure at the site that will need to be disposed of in the cell; and (4) the regulators are unwilling to move forward until March. Doug Sarno and I will work with DOE and Fluor Daniel Fernald to develop better information on these questions for our next meeting.

October 3, 1996

page two

Third, the Task Force plans to meet bi-monthly, beginning with our next meeting on November 9, 1996. I think that this will greatly improve our responsiveness and sense of continuity.

Finally, for your information, I've polled the members of the Task Force whose terms expire this December. It is my expectation that only Jerry Monahan will choose to resign, and our Membership Committee will work closely with him to find a replacement who represents the Building Trades perspective.

The Task Force looks forward to working closely with DOE to bring about broadly acceptable solutions to these issues.

Sincerely,

John S. Applegate
Chair

JSA:drd

cc: Task Force Members