



JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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ROCKY FLATS STATUS REPORT
and
POSITION STATEMENT

OCTOBER 1989

Background. The Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Facility is located in the north-central portion of Jefferson County. The plant is owned by the federal government, and operated for the Department of Energy by a designated private contractor. That contractor is Rockwell International until they are replaced by EG&G in January of 1990.

The facility is the subject of a long history of controversy. These controversies revolve primarily around plutonium and other radioactive releases, and environmental contamination associated with hazardous waste practices. These issues include debates regarding environmental monitoring, employee and community health effects, and the very mission of the plant.

Public Health Issues. The public health concerns involving the Rocky Flats Plant are associated with three major elements; past releases of radiation and other contaminants, current operations, and the potential impacts of future operations. This status report deals only with public health issues associated with current operations.

Regulatory Control. Regulatory control over the plant is the responsibility of the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Colorado Department of Health. These efforts include radiological monitoring and assessment, the handling and disposal of hazardous wastes, cleanup of past contamination, worker safety, and monitoring of releases to the environment (land, air and water).

Current Issues at Rocky Flats. In June of 1989, two events focussed attention on the current operating practices at Rocky Flats. One was a US Justice Department raid and criminal investigation concerning alleged illegal activities involving storage and disposal of radioactive and hazardous wastes. The other was the issuance of a Preliminary Compliance Order to the Department of Energy by the Colorado Department of Health. The order was for alleged violations of the Colorado Hazardous Waste Management Act.

As a result of these events, the State of Colorado and the Department of Energy negotiated an Agreement in Principle, which was signed on June 28, 1989. This Agreement commits technical

and financial support from the Department of Energy to Colorado for expanded environmental oversight, monitoring, emergency response, and other health-related activities associated with the Rocky Flats Plant.

Several important developments have occurred as a result of the Agreement in Principle. One is the formation of the Rocky Flats Scientific Panel. This Panel was appointed by Governor Romer. Its role is to determine whether or not the current and proposed monitoring systems are adequate. The Panel has developed subcommittees to examine air emissions, water discharges and radiation issues.

Progress has also been made on the issue of health studies as addressed in the Agreement. The Rocky Flats Selection Panel has been assembled, and met, on the first step toward developing these studies. This Panel is charged with establishing the parameters for a toxicologic review and dose reconstruction study involving all chemicals and radionuclides at the plant. These parameters will become part of a Request for Proposal to invite qualified contractors to bid on this phase of the health studies. A second panel will be formed at a later date to provide oversight for the health studies.

The Colorado Water Quality Control Commission adopted temporary water quality classifications and standards for the Woman Creek and Walnut Creek drainages in July of 1989. These drainages are up-gradient from Standley Lake and Great Western Reservoir. These standards will require that considerably more monitoring be performed to insure compliance with the NPDES discharge permit. A hearing on permanent standards is scheduled for December 4, 1989. The City of Broomfield has constructed a diversion ditch as a precautionary measure to prevent Walnut Creek water from flowing into Great Western Reservoir.

In July of 1989, the Colorado Department of Health entered into a Settlement Agreement and Compliance Order on Consent with the Department of Energy and Rockwell International. The Settlement stipulates that the Department of Energy and Rockwell will submit a consolidated hazardous waste permit application (termed a Part A application) by mid October. This application is to cover low-level radioactive mixed waste and transuranic waste. The settlement addresses a long standing disagreement between the Colorado Department of Health and Rocky Flats about who has the authority to regulate the treatment, storage and disposal of these wastes. The permit application will be subject to public comment, although a portion of the information will not be available for review by anyone outside the Colorado Department of Health.

The Colorado Department of Health has set up a Rocky Flats Program Office. This is a high-level office with the

responsibility of coordinating all monitoring and regulatory activity involving the Plant. Staff for this office is being assembled. It will consist of about 15 people, including individuals with expertise in water quality, air quality, radiation control, hazardous waste management, and environmental epidemiology. Some staff members from the Rocky Flats Program office will work out of Rocky Flats on a day-to-day basis. The office will also provide oversight of the expedited clean-up of past contamination, as stipulated in the Agreement.

The Colorado Department of Health has expanded the list of routine tests for organic compounds in water, sediment and biological tissue (fish). The water tests include surface water from Standley Lake and Great Western Reservoir, as well as the drainages feeding them, and treated water from the Broomfield, Thornton and Northglenn finished water supplies.

The Rocky Flats Exchange meetings continue to be held monthly. During these meetings, monitoring data is presented for all interested parties. Routine monitoring is reported by Rockwell International, the Colorado Department of Health, the City of Broomfield, and the City of Westminster. Analysis include radioactive and nonradioactive parameters in air, surface water, sediments, fish, and community tap water.

Analysis of surface water for organic compounds, as reported for the July, 1989 sampling period, indicated that Atrazine, a herbicide, was present in ponds in both the Woman Creek and Walnut Creek drainages. Atrazine was not detected in other surface or drinking water samples. Trace amounts of 1,1,2,2 Tetrachloroethane, an industrial solvent, were detected both in ponds and the Woman and Walnut Creek drainages. Trace amounts of this solvent were also detected in the Broomfield and Thornton drinking water supplies. The Department of Energy has provided mobile water treatment units to treat the water in the ponds. On August 16, 1989, the Colorado Department of Health issued a news release which indicated that no detectable levels of these contaminants were found in the treated wastewater from pond B5 on Walnut Creek.

With the exception of the results noted above, the environmental monitoring reports presented at the September 1989 exchange meeting indicate that all measured parameters were in compliance with applicable standards.

Rocky Flats has stockpiled a large volume of mixed radioactive and chemical waste. No disposal site exists for this waste. The WIPP facility in Nevada is the proposed site for disposal, but has not been able to begin operations.

On September 23, 1989 it was announced that EG&G, had been chosen to replace Rockwell International as the contract operator at Rocky Flats. It is anticipated that a transition period will allow EG&G to be in full operation by January 1990. The Colorado Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency have indicated that the new contractor will continue to have the same obligations for environmental protection that Rockwell had.

On September 28, 1989, the Environmental Protection Agency added the Rocky Flats Plant to it's superfund list. This listing will require DOE to develop a community relations plan, provide access to records, provide notice of all cleanup actions and participate in public meetings.

Jefferson County Health Department Involvement. The Department takes steps to keep informed on the situation at Rocky Flats. Staff attends the monthly Rocky Flats Exchange meetings, the Local Governments Rocky Flats Coordinating Committee meetings, and a number of meetings of the Rocky Flats Scientific Panel. The Department's Health Officer participated in the deliberations of the Rocky Flats Contractor Selection Panel. The Department also coordinates information regarding land-use in the vicinity of the plant with the County Planning Department. Other activities include joint inspections of air pollution sources with the Colorado Department of Health, monitoring of the plant's drinking water, and participation in emergency response exercises involving the plant.

Jefferson County Health Department Position. This position statement outlines the Jefferson County Health Department's position regarding current operations at the plant;

1. Residents using the Broomfield, Westminster, Thornton and Northglenn drinking water systems may continue to consume water as before. Test results indicate that these supplies are safe.
2. Monitoring of air, water and soil indicate that the community environment meets current standards and guidelines associated with activities at Rocky Flats. The Department supports the concept of research to quantify the health risk to the community associated with past present and future operations at the plant.
3. The Department supports expanded oversight and monitoring at the Plant, and in the community, and is encouraged with the direction and progress in implementing the Agreement in Principle.

4. The Department supports the recommendations sent to the Rocky Flats Scientific Panel from the Local Governments Rocky Flats Coordinating Committee in a letter dated September 22, 1989.
5. The Department believes that a satisfactory resolution of the waste disposal issue must be reached if Rocky Flats is to continue in operation over the next several years.



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