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# EG&G ROCKY FLATS

EG&G ROCKY FLATS, INC.  
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May 30, 1995

95-RF-04704

Robert H. Birk  
Environmental Restoration Division  
DOE/RFFO

## NEWNET - NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL WATCH NETWORK - MSB-009-95

Based on results of the meetings regarding NEWNET held on May 22, 1995 with Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Jefferson County School District, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), it is apparent that the usefulness and appropriateness of the proposed environmental monitoring system at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (the Site) is questionable. As you know, the primary objective of the NEWNET monitoring system (currently under development by LANL) is to increase the public's understanding of environmental conditions in the vicinity of Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear facilities and DOE nuclear waste transportation routes. Two main issues of concern were raised during the May 22, 1995 meetings that warrant further evaluation before committing to the implementation of NEWNET at the Site.

First, the radiation detectors proposed for use will not provide meaningful information about the primary radioactive chemical of concern at the Site (i.e., plutonium). The three proposed tripod-mounted monitoring stations would be equipped with a gamma radiation detector. The gamma detector would likely measure background gamma radiation not related to the Site and would not detect alpha radiation levels resulting from plutonium. The gamma detector may provide interesting information to the public about background gamma radiation from unknown sources, but would not provide meaningful information regarding the Site-related plutonium levels.

LANL proposes to retrofit the monitoring stations with real-time gross alpha radiation detectors once a LANL prototype has been fully developed and field tested by the end of 1995. A gross alpha radiation detector measures gross alpha radiation activity, including naturally occurring background alpha radiation. This type of detector will not differentiate between natural background alpha radiation sources and alpha radiation activity from specific radionuclides (such as plutonium). Therefore, it may not provide alpha radiation information specific to the Site. LANL also indicated that a real-time alpha monitoring device is currently being developed by LANL to measure airborne levels of specific alpha-emitting radionuclides. According to Mr. Robert Terry of the CDPHE Air Quality Division, the detection sensitivity of this proposed instrument may not be low enough to detect the highest concentrations (0.004 picocuries per cubic meter) presently being measured in air near the 903 Pad area. If this is true, the usefulness of such an instrument may be very limited. At this time, it is not known when this alpha-emitting radionuclide detector would be available for use on the NEWNET monitoring system. LANL indicated that additional costs may be charged to DOE/Rocky Flats Field Office (RFFO) for using this instrumentation on the NEWNET monitoring stations.

Additionally, Mr. Richard Fox of the CDPHE Air Quality Division indicated that the tripod-mounted meteorological monitoring tower proposed for the NEWNET system at the Site may not withstand the wind loads observed in the vicinity of the Site. Mr. Fox stated that several similar tripod-mounted meteorological towers installed near the Site and operated by CDPHE collapsed during wind gusts up to 95 miles per hour.

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*THS:jlm*

ADMIN RECORD  
A-SW-002606

Robert H. Birk  
May 30, 1995  
95-RF-04704  
Page 2

Based on the information presented above, the NEWNET monitoring station system, as designed at this time, is not appropriate for use at the Site. With the exception of meteorological data, which is presently available from several existing ComRad monitoring locations, the environmental data collected from the proposed NEWNET system would not provide meaningful environmental information about the Site to the public.

Second, the cost for implementing and operating the NEWNET system for one year was estimated to be approximately \$280,000. Of this amount, \$200,000 would be needed for LANL (to provide three monitoring stations and training for operating/servicing the monitoring stations, to process and archive the monitoring data, and to develop a NEWNET informational video tape), and \$80,000 would be for associated EG&G Rocky Flats, Inc. management and operational costs. Due to the limited usefulness and applicability of the NEWNET monitoring system at the Site, costs for implementing this program do not appear to be justifiable during these times of limited funding and associated project budget reductions. EG&G recommends that DOE/RFFO reconsider supporting the NEWNET monitoring program until the monitoring data is sufficiently providing meaningful environmental data to the public. DOE/RFFO may otherwise wish to reduce the present NEWNET work scope to include operation of only one monitoring station, instead of three stations, for a one-year trial period or until the radiation monitoring instrumentation is further developed by LANL.

Please call me at extension 8519 or Tracey Spence at extension 8551 if you have any questions or require additional information.



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EG&G Rocky Flats, Inc.

THS:jlm

Orig. and 1 cc - R. H. Birk