



April 4, 2007

Secretary Samuel W. Bodman
S / Forrestal Building
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Bodman:

You are, I believe, familiar with our website <http://www.RocketdyneWatch.org>, as your office has interacted with our group regarding our Freedom of Information Act requests for certain operating documentation of three of the Boeing/Rocketdyne nuclear sites: The Santa Susana Field Laboratory's (SSFL) Energy Technology Engineering Center (ETEC), the De Soto manufacturing facility, and the Canoga Park facility, here in Los Angeles.

I am writing to you today in order to address what is the winding down of your Agency's national "Accelerated Cleanups" Program, in which your Agency 'recalculates risks' and leaves behind nearly all of the nuclear waste at its facilities across the country.

The years of public outcry over your agency's "Accelerated Cleanup" at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant did not slow your agency down in deciding to leave behind virtually all the detritus of over 40 years of nuclear weapons manufacturing, just over 10 miles outside downtown Denver.

We residents of Los Angeles are faced with a mirror situation: Boeing's Rocketdyne Santa Susana Field Laboratory/ETEC is the site of the world's only uncontained nuclear meltdown, the Sodium Reactor Experiment in 1959, the harm of which the History Channel has calculated to be either the 3rd worst nuclear accident in world history (after Chernobyl and Three Mile Island), or 240 times more dangerous than Three Mile Island. (The variability is due to incomplete records which were taken at the time.)

Twelve years ago, the Department of Energy (DOE) honored a Memorandum of Understanding to follow the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) protocols in investigating and cleaning up the contamination at the SSFL. In February 2002, however, DOE announced to a shocked Los Angeles public that it had looked at its regulations and were breaking the agreement with EPA, and were falling back to rely on their own far less protective methods for investigation and cleanup of the site.

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Under DOE's "Accelerated Cleanup" plan, the DOE has chosen to leave behind 99% of the nuclear contamination which has been found; they abruptly pulled the plug on EPA's process, and a full EPA Site Investigation has yet to be done. Meaning, the full extent of the contamination from the SRE meltdown in 1959, the Snap 8 (SD8R) reactor partial meltdown and the other numerous other nuclear accidents and mishaps at the site *is still unknown*.

We have no faith in DOE process, or Boeing's intentions once the DOE turns over the site for unrestricted use. Homes will be built over the nearly intact environmental contamination of the world's only uncontained nuclear meltdown, fifty years of open-air rocket tests, and decades of open burning of chemical and likely nuclear waste.

Boeing's behavior at the SSFL has been far from exemplary. In 1995 their activities triggered an FBI raid; in 1996 they were convicted of environmental crimes and received California's highest fine to date, \$6.5 million, for this burning of chemical and likely radioactive waste in our neighborhoods, and which resulted in the death of two of their scientists who had been ordered to do the burns.

This past August, as a result of pressure from RocketdyneWatch and citizen activists, state regulatory agencies pressed Boeing for historical records relating to one of their spot cleanups at the SSFL, and Boeing came forward with 40 years of burn records documenting illegal burning chemical and likely nuclear wastes – and they had withheld all of this data that was pertinent to this area of the cleanup.

This is the basis for fraud and these are the people in charge of investigating themselves, as is the Department of Energy.

The purpose of this letter is to give you, Secretary Bodman, my personal comments on DOE's cleanup of building 4024 and the Radioactive Materials Handling Facility (RMHF) up at the SSFL, the final two buildings that are under DOE's "Accelerated Cleanup," before the Department of Energy walks away from the entire radioactive mess.

My comments are these:

1. Ensure that DOE goes back to EPA protocols, uses full CERCLA guidance and use EPA residential levels when calculating risk;
2. Complete the full EPA site characterization.

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3. Order DOE to immediately stop filtering the groundwater (which removes contaminated sediments prior to testing) – 20 years of useless data has become the unreliable basis for what environmental investigation which *has* been done.
4. Get DOE back to the business of removing its nuclear waste and ensuring lasting protection of our health and environment.

We, the American Public, have been cut out of the entire process of your agency's decision to "accelerate" its cleanups and leave behind the legacy of nuclear pollution that this country's five decades of atomic exploration has caused.

Your Agency's decision to "Accelerate" its cleanups is being touted as a triumph of "streamlined" environmental process. The DOE boasts nationwide about its savings of scores of billions of dollars and decades of cleanup time.

Let's face it: All you are doing is leaving the vast majority of your waste behind.

This is unconscionable. The good people of the United States of America deserve basic respect and protection – indeed, that was the charter under which all of your Agency's nuclear work was done.

It is appalling that the American government is coldly and methodically "recalculating" its risks to human beings, considering only its own convenience and cost savings.

The dates on the Accelerated Cleanups program are chilling: Engineered by the Bechtel Corporation, the Accelerated Cleanup program was put into action February 2001, merely weeks after the change of Presidential Administration. "Out" dates are being pressed for 2008... Coincidence? Who knows.

What we do know, Secretary Bodman, is that this issue is as clear as day. This is a political and budgetary issue for your agency, one that you should be ashamed of, and one that will leave a legacy of environmental and health impacts stretching out for tens of generations into the future.

We the American Public call the Department of Energy on its shameful conduct.

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Your Agency's legacy will be one of poison, environmental degradation, and destruction, and I want you to think of that every time you look at your children and grandchildren.

And I would urge every individual on this CC list to do the same.

For shame, Secretary Bodman.

And Mr. McNerney? Perhaps Boeing will step in and do the right thing, by financing a full EPA level cleanup.

I await any type of response from any of you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Crawford
RocketdyneWatch.org

CC:

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