OFFICE OF RIVER PROTECTION MANAGER REMARKS
FOR DNFSB PUBLIC HEARING
ON SAFETY CULTURE AT THE WASTE TREATMENT PLANT (WTP)
Written Testimony of Mr. Kevin Smith
Office of River Protection Manager
U.S. Department of Energy

Before the
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board

Toyota Center
7106 West Grandridge Boulevard
Kennewick, WA 99336
August 26, 2015

Good afternoon and welcome distinguished Board members. I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today to share our commitment and vision on the topic of safety culture at the Department of Energy's Office of River Protection, as well as the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP).

As you well know, in 2011 the Board's investigation found significant failures by both ORP and Bechtel National, Inc. contractor management to implement their roles as advocates for a strong safety culture. Subsequently, ORP took a number of steps to address issues identified in Recommendation 2011-1 and to restore the organizational and safety culture at ORP. In addition, ORP oversaw the BNI actions to improve the safety culture at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP). A recent independent review identified improvements in our culture and stated that both ORP and BNI are headed in the right direction.

First and foremost, let me state that ORP is committed to safety and it is our guiding principle in all of our work and activities. I have long believed that if you compromise safety you endanger the mission. To be successful in our mission, ORP must integrate safety into management and work practices at all levels, addressing all types of work and hazards to ensure safety for workers, the public, and the environment. A

positive safety culture is a core aspect of an effective Integrated Safety Management System and an essential part of a strong organizational culture.

My personal assessment of ORP's safety culture today is that it is improving and headed in the right direction. Both the 2014 Federal Viewpoint Survey and 2015 Office of Enterprise Assessments safety culture assessment show positive trends. But there are areas that still need work and as with any cultural change it will take strong leadership and a constant focus on sustaining and reinforcing the right behaviors and management practices for a substantial period of time to fully change culture. In that regard, ORP is fully committed to effective and focused implementation of management systems that support a high-performing organization; a healthy, robust safety culture; and a continuously improving environment. I am confident that ORP is on the right track based on the actions ORP has taken over the last four years and the evolution of the culture I have personally observed in the last few years.

ORP Improvement Actions

ORP took a number of actions after its safety culture shortfalls were identified to improve our culture. These include:

Initial actions taken as a result of receipt of Recommendation 2011-1:
- Developed an ORP management development program focused on improving management's modeling of safety culture attributes.
- Developed and implemented an employee developmental program containing elements that underpin safety culture attributes.
- Established and implemented management and staff behavioral expectations for safety culture attributes as defined in DOE G 450.4-1C, Integrated Safety Management System Guide.
- Incorporated industry best practices in the development of ORP policies, procedures, and staff and management training documents that emphasize the unique and special nature of nuclear technology and operations.
- Implemented an ORP change management process.
- Established and implemented a program for ORP to effectively handle issues and establish an ORP "zero threshold" Issues Management System (IMS).
- Evaluated the Employee Concerns Program and developed improvements.

- Implemented an Organizational Safety Culture Improvement Council (OSCIC) consisting of staff representatives from all ORP Divisions.
- Completion of Safety Conscious Work Environment training for ORP Federal and contractor senior leaders.

Follow-on 2012-2014 Organizational/Safety Culture Improvements and Actions have included:
- ORP has conducted another comprehensive analysis and developed corrective actions in response, which are captured in ORP's Safety Culture Improvement Plan. These include:
  - Developed Key Performance Goals that highlight roles, responsibilities, authorities, and accountabilities at the assistant manager level.
  - Refresher training initiatives.
  - Strengthened employee engagement activities.
  - Communicated strategies of ORP priorities and goals.
  - Creativity and innovation are encouraged.
- Developed an ORP Safety Culture Sustainment Plan that systematically addresses issues identified and plans actions to ensure continued safety culture improvement including:
  - Safety culture refresher training for all staff.
  - Leadership Education and Development program focused on current and future leaders.
  - Restructured the OSCIC to achieve more staff participation and to recruit team members with new ideas and energy.
  - Developed safety culture metrics.
- Improved DOE Oversight process:
  - Aligned Corrective Action Management Program expectations with contractors to provide clarity and consistency in establishing the categorization of issues by priority and safety significance levels, enabling us to better manage issues from an organizational perspective.
  - Finding definitions have been aligned with our contractor's definitions.
  - Revised contract language to include safety culture elements.
  - Revised Assessment Program Committee procedure (aligns both WTP and Tank Farms processes).
- Established an organizational culture team lead focused on organizational/safety culture improvement initiatives. This provides ORP senior level managers with the ability to make more informed decisions in support of continuous improvement and trained personnel to complete initiatives.

Since my arrival as Manager of ORP in 2013, I have initiated further organizational and safety culture improvements within the federal organization and worked to drive greater accountability within the contractor organizations. The actions, targeted to organizational culture, safety culture, and the Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE), have been intended to restore ORP as a high performing organization and to strengthen contractual oversight. Improvement actions for the ORP organization include:

- Established a "no bashing" policy to restore professional working relations.
- Established a "no surprise" policy to promote more proactive and effective communications.
- Modified the BNI Performance Evaluation and Measurement Plan to put 50 percent of the at risk fee on self-discovery and self-reporting.
- Tasked BNI to execute a management improvement program.
- Worked with BNI to find the root causes of an ineffective corrective action program.
- Created a Grand Challenge program to provide a forum for great ideas to be presented.
- Conducted a speaker series on "How to become the supervisor your employees want."
- Combined suspense systems into one system.
- Supported creation of safety culture metrics.
- Supported the OSCIC and encouraged employee participation.
- Established organizational employee expectations of accountability, behavior, communication, trust, and vision.
- Established a supervisor synchronization meeting each Monday for enhanced communication.
- Captured all known issues with WTP in our IMS.
- Implemented annual key performance goals.
- Restored connectivity and effective use of national laboratories.
- Implemented an annual safety culture improvement plan.
- Adopted the accountability ladder to promote individual/personal and organizational accountability.
- Established an employee developmental series.
- Modified performance plans to emphasize Mission Excellence, Organizational Excellence, and Individual Excellence.
- Consolidated the ORP organization back into a single building.

- Conducted integrated staff meetings to promote communication up, down and across the organization, to promote the raising of issues, and to reinforce the various processes available for employees to raise those issues.
- Acquired additional staffing to balance the workload.
- Started email communications directly from the Manager.
- Reinvigorated and rechartered One System.
- Started a campaign to restore DOE's reputation as site owners and independent of our contractors.
- Modified performance evaluation and measurement plans to focus on organizational culture and behaviors.
- Communicated avenues for all employees to get their issues addressed.
- Established an open door policy for the ORP Manager and ORP Deputy Manager.

Results and Indications of Improvements

Independent Assessments: There have been three external assessments conducted by the Office of Enterprise Assessments with the primary objective of providing information on the status of the safety culture at WTP and determining the progress in improvement since previous assessments. In 2015, the following results were reported:
- Innovations appear to be developing a consistent project narrative that support creating shared mental models that characterize high performing organizations
- A shared vision appears to be emerging on a management system model and corresponding culture aligned with the special expectations for nuclear operations
- Stronger professional collaboration with the contractor
- More transparency and optimism with the contractor
- Willingness to raise issues has significantly improved
- Improved trust in our senior leaders
- IMS functioning well
- Significant improvement in being able to "openly challenge management decisions" and "managers are approachable with my concerns."

The "Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey" is a tool used by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that measures employee perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions that characterize successful organizations are present within federal agencies.

- A number of positive trends were identified in the survey with several significant categories rated approximately 10 percent higher than government wide such as:
  - The ability to disclose a violation of the law without fear of reprisal
  - Protection from hazards
  - Respect for my senior leaders
  - Honesty and integrity of my senior leaders
  - ORP has added Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey metrics to its performance metrics and monitoring.
- Some areas remain where improvements are still needed such as:
  - Employee training needs are not adequately considered
  - Roles and responsibilities need to be further defined
  - Quality sometimes suffers
  - Doubts that improvements will be sustained
  - Some individuals are still jaundiced about things.

Future for ORP Safety Culture

I recognize that improving ORP's culture takes time and progress can be easily lost. However, ORP organizational and safety culture is moving in the right direction. To continue effective and focused implementation of management systems that support a high-performing organization and a healthy, robust safety culture in a continuously improving environment, we have established a foundation of practices, programs, and people. The practices include risk-informed conservative decision making, open communication and fostering of an environment of teamwork and mutual respect, free from retribution. The programs include effective resolution of reported problems; performance monitoring through multiple means; use of operational experience; and staff recruitment, selection, retention, and development. We also have the people with the professional capabilities, experience, and values to be successful in our mission while maintaining the priority for safety. With this foundation in place, I am confident that we will continue to improve.

ORP is committed to upholding a high-performing organization and understands the complexities of ensuring a strong safety culture. We believe that ensuring positive behaviors and actions of senior leaders is key to sustaining improvements and we value constant communication, feedback, and reinforcement for all employees. ORP has laid the foundation for a strong and enduring safety culture and is actively building on that foundation to improve our entire organizational culture in becoming the highest performing field office.