ASSISTANT MANAGER AND FEDERAL PROJECT DIRECTOR
FOR THE WASTE TREATMENT AND IMMOBILIZATION PLAN PROJECT REMARKS
FOR DNFSB PUBLIC HEARING
ON SAFETY CULTURE AT THE WASTE TREATMENT PLANT
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Toyota Center
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Introduction

Good afternoon and thank you Ms. Roberson and Mr. Sullivan of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. I welcome the opportunity to address you and all of the participants at this public hearing, to provide my perspective on the importance of building and maintaining a robust safety culture at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP) Project.

I have had the good fortune to serve as the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of River Protection's (ORP) Assistant Manager and Federal Project Director for the WTP Project for over two and a half years now. During that time, my leadership team and I have worked diligently with the rest of ORP's leadership to:

- Address and implement the commitments in our Implementation Plan for the Board's Recommendation 2011-1.
- Implement actions to address recommendations in follow-on safety culture assessments by DOE's Office of Enterprise Assessments.

- Utilize a variety of tools and initiatives to improve our safety culture by enhancing communication, creating alignment with key performance goals, and establishing a shared vision for both the success of the project and the work environment.

We have also worked very closely with our prime contractor, Bechtel National, Inc. (BNI), providing guidance and oversight of their programs and commitments to enhance their safety culture. Over the past several years, BNI has demonstrated a renewed commitment to a safety culture, Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE), and quality through consistent leadership communication, extensive training, self-assessments and effectiveness reviews. BNI has been diligent and persistent in their pursuit of improvements as demonstrated by their recent completion of all 50 actions documented in their Nuclear Safety and Quality Culture Comprehensive Corrective Action Plan. ORP has been active and aggressive in our oversight of BNI by conducting regular assessments and effectiveness reviews of their safety and quality culture programs and initiatives, as well as through consistent leadership interactions.

It is my pleasure to be here today to provide further details on our progress in strengthening the safety culture at the WTP Project. We believe we have made significant strides. We also recognize that sustaining a healthy safety culture requires persistence and consistency at all levels of the organization and at every stage of the mission. That will be the case for the entirety of this project, and it starts with the leaders modeling the desired behaviors.

Importance of Safety Culture at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant

WTP is a challenging endeavor from both a technical and project management perspective. The magnitude and technical complexity of the project present us with a number of unique management challenges. The project has experienced several changes in senior leadership in recent years. This is not an excuse for why it may be challenging to maintain a strong safety culture, but rather to set the stage for the concerted efforts over the past two-plus years. We have worked hard to create a sustainable vision, set measurable goals, and establish a consistent set of values and priorities to create the foundation for a Safety Conscious Work Environment for the WTP Project and within ORP.

DOE P 450.4A, *Integrated Safety Management Policy,* mandates a strong safety culture where safe performance of work and involvement of workers in all aspects of work performance are core values that are deeply, strongly, and consistently held by managers and workers. ORP's MGT-PM-PL-03, *Integrated Safety Management System Description,* is consistent with DOE policy by emphasizing that the responsibility for a strong safety culture starts with line management. Line managers must maintain a strong focus on the safe conduct of work activities, and create an environment that fosters a questioning attitude by all employees. For the WTP Project, that starts with me. And while my line management team has a specific leadership responsibility, we continually emphasize that safety and a Safety Conscious Work Environment are a shared responsibility for everyone on the project. We strive to work collectively as a team to continuously improve our safety behaviors – to set an example of safe work practices for ourselves and our coworkers.

Actions to Enhance our Safety Culture

One of the first actions I took as the WTP Federal Project Director was to assemble my leadership team and a cross section of the workforce to develop a common set of goals and organizational norms, which we could collectively agree and build upon for the future. After conducting a series of workshops, follow-up sessions, and soliciting input and feedback from the entire workforce, we established:

- *Our goal:* To safely design, construct, and commission a safe, high quality, and efficient WTP that supports the ORP mission
- *Our promise:* A continuously improving safety and quality culture driven by worker involvement and feedback
- *Our commitment:* Organizational excellence built on personal excellence and staff development.

The first half of the goal statement addresses our current work to safely complete the WTP capital line item construction project. In this context, "safely" refers to the importance of incorporating safety principals and controls into the design, working safely at the WTP

construction site and at all of our work areas, and safely starting up and commissioning the plant as we turn over to cold and hot commissioning.

The second half of the goal statement addresses the desired result from our project work. Completing the Hanford tank waste cleanup mission will require a WTP that can operate at a high availability over a 40-year service life, and at the same time protect our workers, the public, and the environment from occupational, chemical, and nuclear hazards. WTP must be designed and built to be both safe and efficient over the long haul. Success of the ORP mission depends on it.

My line management team and I have worked hard to apply these concepts in our communications and in our daily work practices. When used in tandem with the ORP vision and mission statements as well as key performance goals, we believe we have the foundation in place to build on a strong commitment to the tank waste treatment mission across the ORP workforce. We have also made a concerted effort to significantly increase the types and frequency of opportunities I have to interface directly with the WTP workforce. I will talk briefly about four of these initiatives.

- First, we have established a weekly Integrated Project Team meeting that is open to all members of the WTP federal project team and direct support contractors. Built around a structured agenda that includes participation from all ORP functional groups, this meeting provides an opportunity for the entire team to understand what is happening on all of our work-fronts and receive weekly updates on critical project activities and priorities.

- Second, we established a forum for periodic communication in an "all-hands" format. Held approximately monthly, these forums provide me the opportunity to bring everyone up to date on the project from a more global perspective, and to answer questions or address concerns related to the topics I address or any other relevant topic.

- Additionally, I have just recently completed my third round of small-group sessions with my workforce focused specifically on fostering a SCWE. I have conducted these sessions over the past two years with groups of 10–15 employees each to communicate my commitment to our safety culture improvements, but more importantly to solicit and

receive direct feedback from my workforce in a smaller group setting. These sessions have spawned some very candid communications that have helped me focus my attention on areas most relevant to the WTP team and successful completion of the mission.

- Lastly, based on feedback I received in the early small-group sessions I just discussed, I established a periodic newsletter as a means of broadening my methods for communicating with the workforce on pertinent topics. I use this newsletter, called "Bill's Perspective," to provide my thoughts on a broad range of technical, programmatic, and safety culture topics. Since May 2014, I have published 40 of these newsletters, 10 of which have been focused specifically on safety culture topics including leadership commitment; WTP Project safety metrics; organizational learning; and healthy behavioral traits including teamwork and mutual respect, personal accountability, and building trust. Earlier this year, I dedicated two newsletters to the topic of making a personal commitment to safety, which was an initiative spurred by the ORP Organizational and Safety Culture Improvement Council. The first of those two issues is posted on the bulletin board outside my office, in which I gave my personal commitment as the leader of the WTP organization "to work continuously to improve our safety culture, and to continue to focus on everyone's personal safety."

One of the early assessments by the Office of Oversight Assessments stressed the need for more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the WTP Project team. To address this gap, we held a workshop in November 2013 with WTP Project leadership and a cross section of the federal staff to review and address our collective roles, responsibilities, authorities, and accountabilities. After a series of follow-up meetings and comment resolution on draft versions, we disseminated a new set of roles, responsibilities, authorities, and accountabilities for the WTP Project federal staff to complement the formal roles and responsibilities documented in ORP procedure MGT-PM-PL-13, *Office of River Protection Management Mission and Functions Statement*. We also published a new ORP guide to provide stronger oversight of WTP to help project personnel better understand their specific responsibilities in conducting Federal oversight functions, and how each oversight function fits into the broader oversight responsibilities for the WTP Contract, the project, and the ORP organization.

The most recent (2015) safety culture assessment by the DOE Office of Enterprise Assessments confirmed that we are making progress in improving the culture at ORP and WTP. For BNI, the assessment report cited, "a marked improvement in how BNI personnel perceive the behaviors important for a healthy safety culture; comments from interviewees at all levels of the organization were more positive than in 2014 or 2011." For ORP, the assessment report cited, "improvement in how ORP perceive the behaviors important for a healthy safety culture. Survey results identified positive changes in the values of all 12 behavioral norms the survey used to assess organizational culture." While we are pleased at the progress that has been made, we recognize and concur with the assessment conclusion that there is much work yet to be done.

In closing, I want to reiterate my personal commitment to fostering a positive safety culture and a Safety Conscious Work Environment, and to continuously improving the safety, quality, and organizational culture for the WTP Project and the ORP organization. I thank the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for the continued focus on this topic, and I look forward to the discussions and insight that will come from this public hearing.