

From: Scott Roberson <scott.roberson10@yahoo.com>
To: "andrewt@dnfsb.gov" <andrewt@dnfsb.gov>
Date: 7/19/2011 9:22 PM
Subject: public comment
Attachments: dnfsb letter.docx

To whom it may concern

I am filing this letter in response to the Defense Board's safety culture letter on Hanford.

My name is Scott Roberson. I worked at Hanford for 17 years and 8 months prior to being terminated on March 25th, 2011. During my employment I have worked for several contractors as a Senior Health Physics Technician (SHPT). During the 17 years I had never been disciplined in any manner, verbal or written. In 2009 I became a union steward for local 984 supporting Base Operations in the East Tank Farms. In early 2011 I became the Chief Union Steward. Having worked in Tank Farms for the entire time I was employed I have a clear understanding of Tank Farm operations. This would include firsthand knowledge of the adverse effects of failure to follow procedures and proper safety standards. It is for this reason I feel compelled to comment on the current situation at the Hanford Nuclear Facility, with regard to retaliation by the companies toward workers who bring up safety concerns and issues, specifically URS and WRPS.

Having worked for several contractors I have the ability to compare the way "business is done" within the various companies.

In 2008 WRPS took over the Tank Farms contract. It was immediately evident that WRPS had a lower standard of conducting business as far as safety was concerned. They did not require pre-job briefs for low level work packages as the previous companies had. One specific incident that comes to mind is on a job I was assigned to work with instrument technicians to pull tops off of risers and calibrate magnahelics. After receiving the incorrect information on which RWP to ace in under I asked to review the job package. After further review of the job package it was also noted that an Industrial Hygiene Technician was needed for the job. I then took the job package and asked the supervisor if he had reviewed the package and he said that all low risk work packages were the same and that he did not need to review it. I then pointed out that in the past all work packages, including low risk ones, had a pre-job and that if we had received a pre-job then we would not have missed the requirement to have an Industrial Hygiene Technician do our monitoring for us. The supervisors response was "oh s*** I'll get back to you". This is just one small instance but it shows how WRPS changed the safety culture in the matter of just a few months of receiving the contract.

The working relationship with a WRPS supervisor, Grant Bachaud, was strained to say the least. I witnessed firsthand, his volatile demeanor. Mr. Bachaud shared an office with two other supervisors. One day another technician and I were in that office speaking to one of the supervisors that shared the office. Mr. Bachaud received a phone call and immediately turned to us and said "get the hell out of my office!" And began to physically herd us out the door and proceeded to slam the door. The supervisor we had been talking to apologized to us for Mr. Bachaud's behavior. The volatile behavior that Mr. Bachaud displayed created an environment which HPT's were hesitant to say the least in bringing up concerns. They would rather work with a flawed document than raise a concern with Mr. Bachaud. Mr. Bachaud got to the point that he would not even speak to the HPT's that he was in charge of, prior to him transferring to another work group. DOE conducted a tri-annual assessment and as a result the company conducted a reorganization placing Mr. Bachaud back at Base Operations as the Radiological Control Area Manager. This put me in a very uncomfortable position due to Mr. Bachaud's prior behavior. Another union steward and I contacted ED Kennedy due to several HPT's bringing forward concerns about Mr. Bachaud and his new elevated position. A meeting was held with Mr. Kennedy the other union steward and myself, where our concerns were made clear to Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy said he would talk to the company vice-president and the newly appointed radiological

controls manager about Mr. Bachaud's past behaviors and then he would get back to us. As of this day I still have not heard from Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Bachaud's behavior was consistent with the hostile behavior that he had shown in the past. In fact it had become worse now that he had the final decision on all matters.

Mr. Bachaud fit into WRPS's work culture, where safety issues and procedural compliance was downplayed while company goals and job completion were brought to the forefront. In one case at 702-AZ where a High Contamination Boundary (HCA) was inappropriately moved to facilitate the completion of a work evolution which had a monetary fee attached to it. The incident was brought to the forefront by an Instrument Technician who had discovered that the boundary had been moved over the weekend. Another Technician and myself were dispatched to the 702-AZ building to see if the boundary had been moved and conduct a survey. After verifying the boundary had been moved a PER was written on the incident. The company wanted no further actions to be taken. I insisted on a fact finding meeting be held due to the fact that there was a potential for the spread of contamination to the worker or workers who had been in the area. I was chastised by the operations manager Bob Wilkinson for my concern. WRPS has repeatedly shown a reluctance to conduct fact finding meetings and when forced to hold a meeting they hand pick the attendees to ensure a favorable outcome.

WRPS is the worst company that I had worked for in my tenure at Hanford. My dismissal and the dismissal of the other three workers can only be attributed to the fact that we were safety conscience and procedurally compliant.

The DNFSB has it right when it says that workers are fearful of raising concerns at Hanford. The way that the contractor and the DOE have treated employees out here practically guarantees a chilled work environment. I am very glad that the DNFSB has written this letter that calls out the truth of what is happening, and I hope that you expand your investigations and make recommendations about the tank farm safety culture as well.

I support the DNFSB's efforts to provide independent oversight at DOE, and the recommendations in its letter.

I would be happy to answer any questions and can be reached at 509-882-2022 or 509-305-0397

Sincerely
Scott Roberson