

Energy Department Cites University of California for Safety Procedures

For Immediate Release
Release Date: October 6, 2000

WASHINGTON, DC The Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a Preliminary Notice of Violation to the University of California, the department's contractor for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in Livermore, Calif., for violating nuclear safety requirements. The violations involved failures in the laboratory's management of their Authorization Basis - a system of documents, work requirements and planning processes used to ensure nuclear safety.

Although there were no releases of radiation and no one was harmed, the violations center on the laboratory's failure to address weaknesses in its Authorization Basis systems and multiple and recurring failures to adhere to the requirements in Authorization Basis documents.

The Energy Department relies on Authorization Basis documentation to define safe operating conditions and ensure that work at nuclear facilities is conducted in a way that protects the public and the workforce from releases of radiation associated with its nuclear activities.

Since January 2000, the laboratory has taken a number of corrective actions to address these problems, as defined in a formal Corrective Action Plan in June. A recently completed review of the laboratory's safety management practices indicates that improvements have been made.

The notice was issued by John Gordon, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, upon the recommendation of Dr. David Michaels, Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environment, Safety and Health. It follows a nine month investigation by DOE's Office of Enforcement in conjunction with the Oakland Operations Office.

The Preliminary Notice of Violation is issued under the Price-Anderson Amendments Act which allows the department to fine contractors for nuclear safety violations, but exempts not-for-profit institutions and their subcontractors. LLNL is operated by the University of California, a not-for-profit institution. If the university were a for-profit contractor, the department would have assessed a civil penalty of \$82,500 - 25 percent lower than an initial \$110,000 penalty due to the comprehensive corrective actions taken by the university.

The Preliminary Notice of Violation, which was issued on Sept. 27, will become final in 30 days unless the University of California provides sufficient justification and information to rebut the findings of the enforcement action.

A copy of the violation is available on the Internet at: <http://www.eh.doe.gov/enforce>.

Media Contact(s):

April Kaufman, 202/586-5806

Release No. R-00-257