

**GAO**

Fact Sheet for the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, and Government Processes, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

March 1986

**ENVIRONMENT,  
SAFETY, & HEALTH**

**Status of Department  
of Energy's  
Implementation of  
1985 Initiatives**



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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

RESOURCES, COMMUNITY,  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION

March 4, 1986

B-222195

The Honorable John Glenn  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear  
Proliferation, and Government Processes  
Committee on Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Glenn:

On April 15, 1985, you asked us to review the Department of Energy's (DOE's) overall effectiveness in protecting worker health and safety and the surrounding environment at its defense facilities. In response to your request, we began work which would, among other things, examine DOE's environmental, safety, and health (ES&H) programs. On September 18, 1985, the Secretary of Energy announced several initiatives to strengthen these programs. Because these initiatives could make important changes in the way DOE headquarters and field offices conduct their ES&H activities, your office asked us to monitor the implementation of these initiatives and to brief you and your staff periodically on their status. Accordingly, we briefed your office on February 10, 1986, and agreed to provide you with this fact sheet highlighting, as of February 26, 1986, (1) the status of the September 1985 ES&H initiatives and (2) DOE's planned actions to complete the initiatives. In addition, we agreed to continue monitoring DOE's progress in implementing the initiatives as part of our ongoing review and planned report on DOE's overall ES&H activities at defense facilities.

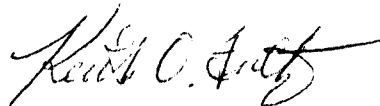
The Secretary of Energy's initiatives are (1) reorganizing the ES&H activities at DOE headquarters, (2) revising ES&H orders, (3) conducting a major environmental survey of conditions at DOE sites, (4) carrying out major technical safety appraisals of conditions at DOE's nuclear facilities, (5) revising ES&H information reporting and tracking systems, (6) increasing environmental guidance, and (7) enhancing the professional development of ES&H staff. DOE's ES&H staff believe these initiatives can provide increased authority and additional information to enable them to more effectively oversee ES&H activities.

Overall, we found that, as of February 26, 1986, DOE has focused its attention on implementing the first four initiatives. First, it has essentially completed reorganizing the headquarters ES&H function. The reorganization elevates ES&H responsibilities to the Assistant Secretary level from its previous Deputy Assistant Secretary level, creates a new position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environment, and establishes a new Office of Environmental Audit and Compliance. Second, DOE has revised but not yet issued six department-wide orders that DOE ES&H officials believe provide the organization with additional authority in ES&H matters. Third, DOE has developed preliminary plans outlining the scope, methodology, and tentative schedules for performing the environmental survey and technical safety appraisals. As of February 26, 1986, field work has started for the technical safety appraisals but not for the environmental survey. The survey and appraisals are tentatively scheduled to be completed by late 1988 and early 1989, respectively. Fourth, DOE is in the early stages of conceptualizing how it will implement its three remaining ES&H management and professional development initiatives.

We interviewed headquarters ES&H officials to determine DOE's purpose, status, and plans for each of these initiatives. To develop more specific information on DOE's comprehensive environmental survey and technical safety appraisals, we reviewed DOE memoranda and plans discussing their scope, methodology, and schedules. To develop an overall perspective on the need for and potential implications of the initiatives, we relied on our continuing work in the ES&H area and on previous GAO reports concerning DOE's ES&H program, as well as reviewed an April 1985 DOE study discussing the need for ES&H organizational changes.

We discussed the material presented in this fact sheet with DOE officials and incorporated their views as appropriate. We are sending copies to the Chairman, House Science and Technology Committee; the Chairman, Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research, and Environment, House Science and Technology Committee; DOE; and other interested parties. If you have any questions regarding this fact sheet, please call me at 275-1441.

Sincerely yours,



Keith O. Fultz  
Associate Director

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ABBREVIATIONS

DOE	Department of Energy
ES&H	Environment, safety, and health
GAO	General Accounting Office



SECTION 1:

REORGANIZE ES&H ACTIVITIES

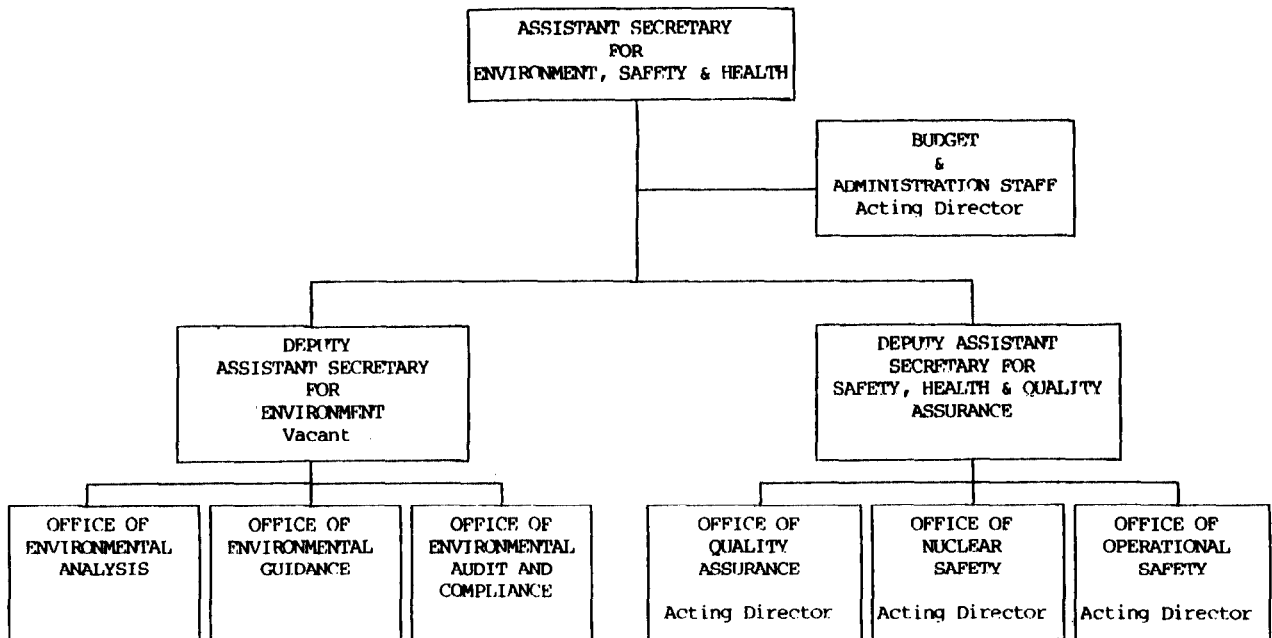
PURPOSE: To consolidate and update the ES&H function within DOE

STATUS:

- The Secretary of Energy has approved ES&H's revised organizational structure (see fig. 1).
- 118 ES&H staff positions are filled. (A total of 128 positions are authorized and additional positions may be requested.)
- Target dates for filling vacancies and/or appointing office directors have not been established.

Figure 1:

ES&H's Revised Organizational Structure



DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Appoint Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environment.
- Appoint directors for budget and administration and for offices of nuclear safety, operational safety, and quality assurance.
- Fill unstaffed positions as soon as possible.

## SECTION 2:

### REVISE ES&H ORDERS

**PURPOSE:** To redefine and strengthen ES&H's oversight role and responsibilities in DOE operations

**STATUS:**

- ES&H's Assistant Secretary has approved six draft ES&H orders for DOE-wide coordination and review.
- The six orders being revised address
  - environmental, safety, and health programs for DOE operations (Order 5480.1A). This order delineates DOE headquarters' and field offices' responsibilities for implementing DOE's ES&H programs.
  - safety of reactors and other nuclear facilities (Orders 5480.5 and 5480.6). These orders set forth controls for preventing nuclear accidents and releases of radioactive material.
  - preparation and review of safety analysis reports (Order 5481.1B). This order establishes DOE's requirements for reports that identify potential safety hazards at facilities and evaluate alternative actions to eliminate or mitigate these hazards.
  - the ES&H appraisal process (Order 5482.1B). This order establishes a hierarchical system of reviews for evaluating the ES&H performance of contractors and field offices.
  - quality assurance requirements (Order 5700.6B). This order assigns responsibilities for establishing, implementing, and maintaining programs intended to optimize equipment reliability and personnel performance at all facilities.
- The target date for issuing the revised orders has not been established.

**DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:**

- Forward revised orders to DOE's Management and Administration staff for DOE-wide coordination and review.



- Circulate orders to DOE program and field offices for their comments.
- Resolve any problems.
- Issue revised ES&H orders.

### SECTION 3:

#### CONDUCT COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY

#### OF DOE FACILITIES

**PURPOSE:** (1) To identify any specific environmental problems existing at DOE facilities and (2) to set priorities for necessary corrective action

**STATUS:**

- ES&H's Office of Environmental Audit and Compliance will lead environmental surveys of 41 nuclear and nonnuclear DOE sites. According to ES&H's Director, Office of Budget and Administration, these sites include all DOE operating facilities.
- The office has developed a draft management plan describing the survey's purpose, scope, and general methodology.
- The survey will be conducted by five teams. One of the five team leaders has been selected.
- The first site survey will be conducted in June 1986 at the Feed Materials Production Center, Fernald, Ohio. The schedule for remaining facilities has not been completed.
- The target date for issuing the survey's comprehensive report is late calendar year 1988. Interim reports will be issued as work is completed at each site.

**DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:**

- Complete selection of environmental survey personnel.
- Obtain ES&H Assistant Secretary's approval of survey's final schedule.
- Complete the management plan describing the survey's purpose, scope, and general methodology.
- Begin site surveys in June 1986.
- Issue interim reports identifying environmental problems that require immediate attention as well as problems that can be addressed long-term.
- Issue survey's comprehensive report on work at 41 sites.

SECTION 4:  
CONDUCT TECHNICAL SAFETY APPRAISALS OF  
DOE NUCLEAR FACILITIES

PURPOSE: (1) To identify any specific health and safety problems existing at DOE nuclear facilities and (2) to set priorities for necessary corrective action

STATUS:

- ES&H's Office of Nuclear Safety will lead technical safety appraisals of 51 of DOE's nuclear facilities located at 11 sites. According to the office's director, the 51 facilities include all DOE reactors plus other nuclear facilities that DOE has designated as "high hazard."
- The Office has developed a draft management plan describing the appraisals' purpose, scope, and general methodology.
- Appraisals will be carried out by four teams. All members of the team conducting the first appraisal have been selected.
- The on-site work for the first appraisal is scheduled to be completed at Richland Operations Office's Fast Flux Test Facility on March 7, 1986. The schedule for remaining facilities has not been completed.
- A comprehensive report on all appraisals is scheduled to be issued early in calendar year 1989. Interim reports will be issued as work is completed at each site.

DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Complete selection of members for the three remaining appraisal teams.
- Obtain ES&H Assistant Secretary's approval of appraisals' final schedule.
- Complete the management plan describing appraisals' purpose, scope, and general methodology.
- Issue interim reports identifying health and safety problems that require immediate attention as well as problems that can be addressed long-term.
- Issue comprehensive appraisal report on work at 51 facilities at 11 sites.

SECTION 5:

REVISE FIELD REPORTING AND  
INFORMATION TRACKING SYSTEM

**PURPOSE:** To develop an information system that DOE headquarters can use to monitor ES&H problems at facilities and the corrective actions taken

**STATUS:**

- ES&H's Office of Budget and Administration is responsible for developing the system.
- ES&H's Director of Budget and Administration has appointed a task force (1) to define the type of information needed and (2) to develop the system. Task force members have been appointed and have started their work.
- The tentative target date for operating the new system is October 1986.

**DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:**

- Finish definition of ES&H's information needs.
- Complete development of an information system.

SECTION 6:

INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDANCE

PURPOSE: To provide DOE program and field offices with additional and clearer environmental guidance to meet regulatory deadlines

STATUS:

- ES&H's Director, Office of Environmental Guidance, has instructed his staff to identify and set priorities by mid-March 1986 on:
  - existing DOE environmental guidance that the office should clarify, and
  - emerging regulatory issues (e.g., radioactive and hazardous waste clean-up standards) that might affect DOE.
- The director has also developed new DOE-wide procedures for commenting on emerging regulatory issues.
- The target date for issuing additional guidance has not been established.

DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Complete the effort to identify and set priorities on environmental guidance and regulatory issues for the office.
- Develop additional environmental guidance as appropriate.

SECTION 7:

ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE: To assure the continued professional competence of ES&H staff

STATUS:

- ES&H's Director of Budget and Administration is responsible for coordinating professional development activities.
- To date, according to the director, ES&H's efforts to enhance professional competencies have centered on (1) hiring additional staff with specialized ES&H skills and experience to fill the organization's vacancies and (2) assigning existing staff to new subject areas to broaden their technical experience.
- According to the director, DOE intends to develop a plan setting forth specific ES&H training needs and other professional development activities to enhance staff competencies.

DOE'S PLANNED ACTIONS:

- Develop and implement a plan to enhance headquarters and field professional competencies.

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