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Paula H. Doughty
Manager, Environmental Compliance

SEP 28 1999
DIV. OF OIL, GAS & MINING

Kennecott

September 24, 1999

Mr. Kent Grey
Division of Environmental Response and Remediation
Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 144480
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4840

Ms. Sharell Shilling
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region VIII
Emergency Response Branch
999 18th Street - Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202-2405

Mr. Dennis Stanley
Salt Lake County - Emergency Services
440 South 300 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

RE: Release of Tailings Slurry on September 22, 1999, NRC No. 499856

Dear Sirs:

This letter describes the events relating to the release of about 100 tons of tailings material on 9/22/99 at the Kennecott Copperton Concentrator. The release occurred between approximately 12:00 and 12:15 PM when the tailings slurry overflowed through a vent on the tailings pipeline. The pipeline transports tailings from the Copperton Concentrator to the tailings impoundment. The overflow occurred during emergency repair operations to replace a cracked pressure value nipple on the pipeline that transports water from the tailings thickeners to the process ponds. To facilitate repairs, pumps were shut down and water diverted to the tailings line. The tailings' line was unable to handle the additional water resulting in an overflow through a vent valve. The overflow was discovered and the situation corrected within 15 minutes. In the future should repairs require the pumps to be shut down, flows will be cut through the floatation circuit in order to prevent a reoccurrence of this incident.

The slurry entered Barneys Wash and flowed for approximately 4000 feet before becoming impounded against a road berm on Kennecott Utah Copper property. Tailings were deposited along the flow path. The deposits are about two inches deep near the pipeline and thin to about 1/8 inch at the road berm. This material is currently being removed along with some of the underlying soil and is being returned to the concentrator process circuit. The impacted area against the road berm is not currently accessible, but it will be cleaned up when it has dried out enough for heavy equipment to be used.

The tailings contain trace concentrations of metals, and an estimated 5 pounds of lead, 5 pounds of arsenic and 20 pounds of chromium were released. The reportable quantity for these metals is one pound. Rich Borden notified by telephone Mr. Jillson of the NRC at 9:25 AM and Mr. Allen Jones at the Utah State Emergency Response Commission at 9:40 AM on September 23.

If you have any questions regarding this incident, please call me at (801) 252-3257.

Sincerely,

Paula H. Doughty

Paula H. Doughty
Manager, Environmental Compliance

cc: Wayne Hedberg, Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
Utah Division of Water Quality