

Mr. FUQUA. You try to take corrective action so that this same individual will not go to sleep at the switch again, so to speak?

Dr. MUELLER. Yes, sir.

Mr. FUQUA. Because this can get rather expensive.

Dr. MUELLER. So far, we have not, to my knowledge, repeated an accident in the program. We have learned from each one, we have learned enough to avoid doing that again.

Now, it is not, however, true that we haven't had the same or similar kinds of accidents in various contractors plants because there are different ways of doing things and, occasionally, we will have a similar accident occur in a different contractors plant for different reasons.

Mr. FUQUA. In short, you try to take corrective action so that this same type of situation will not develop again?

Dr. MUELLER. We take very positive corrective actions and we have had good experience in this regard.

Mr. FUQUA. Thank you.

Mr. GURNEY. I would like to bring to the attention of the subcommittee that, on the trip of the subcommittee to California this year, this accident was gone into at great length in our hearings with the contractor involved and it will be in the report of the hearings.

One of the interesting things was the fact that the contractor itself, on its own initiative, pinpointed the cause of this accident almost within a matter of hours after its own investigation into the accident in great detail, and also has revised its procedure to see that nothing like this occurs again.

I think that should be brought out in the hearing at this time.

Mr. RUMSFELD. Dr. Mueller, you made the statement that you never repeated an accident. This, of course, is good. On the other hand, if an overall procedure is defective and therefore permits new and different accidents to occur from time to time; this, in essence, is equal if not more serious than repeating a specific accident.

The point I am raising is this question of the possibility of a truly independent review board. My thought is that if one existed—and it does not now exist, and there seems to be no inclination to create one—this type of mechanism could, over a period of time, help to pinpoint potential difficulties before they lead to accidents and thus would be very useful.

You made a comment on this subject which interested me. You indicated the importance of having people who understand the system well enough to serve on these accident review boards with respect to this one you mentioned.

Are you suggesting that there are not people who are not NASA employees or contractor employees who have sufficient competence in these areas to serve on such a board?

Dr. MUELLER. Well, no, I wouldn't say that at all. The problem one finds, of course, is that the number of people with experience in this kind of development program, with this kind of equipment and this kind of operation is quite limited. You can't draw on a very large number of people in universities, for example, because this is a different thing than universities are accustomed to.

You can draw on the Air Force for competence in this area because they have had experience in ballistic missiles but then to a very large