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November 14, 2024

The Honorable Robert P. Storch  
Inspector General  
Office fo Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense  
4800 Mark Center Drive  
Alexandria, Virginia 22350-1500

Dear Inspector General Storch:

Subject: Department of Defense (DOD) Office of Inspector General (OIG) Evaluation Reports on the Hawai'i Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF), Report Nos. DODIG-2025-011, DODIG-2025-012, and DODIG-2025-013

Board of Water Supply (BWS) is pleased to review the subject DOD OIG reports on the overall safety of the Defense Fuel Support Point Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH), including the operation of the Navy's RHBFSF and the actions taken in response to the contamination of the JBPHH Community Water System in Oah'u, Hawai'i. Additionally, the DOD OIG released a management advisory highlighting concerns with the Navy's handling of incidents involving aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF), a fire suppressant, at Defense Fuel Support Point JBPHH.

These reports discuss Navy officials identifying an unintentional release of approximately 19,000 gallons of jet propellant 5 (JP-5) fuel on May 6, 2021, at the RHBFSF that was inadvertently pumped into an overhead drainage pipeline and remained undiscovered for about six months. On November 20, 2021, an employee driving a small vehicle hauling a cart accidentally struck a drain valve on the overhead pipeline, causing the pipeline to crack. The JP-5 fuel flowed from the pipeline for approximately 34 hours and some of the fuel eventually contaminated the JBPHH Community Water System.

The contamination of the Navy Water System directly impacted more than 90,000 people living on JBPHH. DOD medical providers documented more than 6,100 medical encounters with patients who experienced a range of symptoms, including gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms, as well as depression and paranoia. DOD officials reported spending more than \$220 million for the drinking water contamination incident. Furthermore, the National Defense Authorization Acts for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 included more than \$2.1 billion in funding related to the drinking water contamination incident and the planned closure of the RHBFSF.

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The DOD OIG determined that Navy officials did not effectively manage Defense Fuel Support Point JBPHH operations, maintenance, safety, and oversight in accordance with federal and state laws and DOD policy. Navy officials also did not effectively manage the response to fuel incidents. The DOD OIG determined that Navy officials missed multiple opportunities to prevent or mitigate the November 2021 fuel incident and subsequent contamination of drinking water. The DOD OIG also identified that Navy officials failed to report past incidents involving AFFF in accordance with DOD policy and found Navy officials did not adequately document the response and environmental cleanup for the incidents involving AFFF.

Based on the findings, the DOD OIG made three recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and 13 recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy. The DOD OIG's 16 recommendations build upon, but do not duplicate, the recommendations made by other agencies in prior reports. The DOD OIG will continue to monitor the progress of the DOD and the Navy toward fully implementing all DOD OIG recommendations.

BWS appreciates the DOD OIG work on these reports. The contents are consistent with what we have learned since the 2014 JP-8 release at the Red Hill fuel facility tank #5, including the many reports and information provided by the Navy since 2021. However, the releases from the Red Hill fuel facility did not begin in 2021, 2014, or even 2007. Releases from Red Hill began when the facility was first constructed. While the DOD OIG recognizes that there have been previous spills from the Navy's system and includes a list of some incidents that have occurred since 2007 (see Table 1, p. 25), the report appears to underreport the number and underestimate the volume of all historical releases, many of which the Navy has previously acknowledged and BWS has thoroughly documented. We ask that the DOD OIG update the report to include a description of all the documented releases that have occurred from the Red Hill fuel facility. We respectfully request to receive copies of the Navy's replies in response to the DOD OIG recommendations and an unredacted copy of the report to show transparency and confidence in BWS and the public's right to know about the nature and extent of the fuel releases and operational issues that have occurred at the Red Hill fuel facility.

Thank you again. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 808-748-5061.

Very truly yours,



Ernest Y.W. Lau, P.E.  
Manager and Chief Engineer

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