

June 17 1971

Honorable Edward E. Johnston
 High Commissioner
 United States Department of Interior
 Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
 Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. Johnston:

By letter of January 14, 1971, to Manager, Honolulu Area Office, USAEC, you made special inquiry regarding the radioactive safety of the Peter-Oboe complex and asked if it would be safe for workers to plant coconuts there. On a recent trip in the Pacific, Dr. Robert Conard, of the Brookhaven National Laboratory, was asked by Mr. Jack Tobin to check on two additional items:

1. Are there any restrictions on digging foundations for houses on Bikini Island?
2. Can work crews drink well water on Bikini Island?

As to the question of safety of planting coconut trees on the Peter-Oboe complex, the results of studies of radiation and contamination levels indicate that the levels in the islands of Oboe (Aerokoj), Peter (Aerokojul), and Roger (Bikdrin), are among the lowest in the Atoll. It would be safe to plant coconut trees there. Such planting should not take place on Tare (Eneman). We suggest that the causeway joining Lele to Bikdrin makes a logical dividing line between the area that may be planted and the area where such planting should be restricted.

There are no restrictions on digging foundations on Bikini Island from a radiological viewpoint. This would apply to both depth and location. As to drinking well water from Bikini Island, well water

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samples have been taken from a number of locations over a period of time on Bikini Island. These indicate that from a radiological viewpoint, the water is safe to drink. However, before such use, water from wells on Bikini Island should be analyzed to insure it is potable. Also, we would want to periodically collect and analyze samples from each well. At this point in time, we cannot say how much fresh water is available as groundwater at Bikini Island or whether this source is an adequate supply for those who return. We urge that the residents not rely on groundwater as a source of drinking water and that provisions be made to collect and store rainwater as was done in the past.

Sincerely,

Martin B. Biles, Director
Division of Operational Safety

cc: Farrington, DOL
Law, TT
Totter, BM
Giller, MA
Miller, NY
Dinunno, OEA
Conard, BNL

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