



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Energy

INSPECTION REPORT

DOE-OIG-23-24

June 2023

**THE OFFICE OF SECURE
TRANSPORTATION'S AGENT
QUALIFICATIONS FOR WORK
PERFORMANCE AND MISSIONS**



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

June 12, 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR DEFENSE PROGRAMS,
NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

SUBJECT: Inspection Report on The Office of Secure Transportation's Agent Qualifications for Work Performance and Missions

The attached report discusses our review of the Office of Secure Transportation's policies for providing and tracking training for Federal Agents to determine if they have the proper qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission. This report contains one recommendation that, if fully implemented, should help ensure that the Office of Secure Transportation's policies and the training tracking system are accurate and current. Management fully concurred with our recommendation.

We conducted our inspection from November 2021 through February 2023 in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020). We appreciated the cooperation and assistance received during this inspection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Cruz".

Anthony Cruz
Assistant Inspector General
for Inspections, Intelligence Oversight,
and Special Projects
Office of Inspector General

cc: Deputy Secretary
Chief of Staff



Department of Energy Office of Inspector General

The Office of Secure Transportation's Agent Qualifications for Work Performance and Missions (DOE-OIG-23-24)

WHY THE OIG PERFORMED THIS REVIEW

Since 1947, the National Nuclear Security Administration and its predecessor agencies have moved nuclear weapons, weapons components, and special nuclear materials by commercial and Government transportation modes. In 1975, the Office of Secure Transportation (OST) was established for the safe and secure transport of Government-owned special nuclear materials in the contiguous U.S., escorted by armed Federal Agents. OST Federal Agents must comply with the Human Reliability Program (HRP), formal training per assignment, and special medical requirements.

We initiated this inspection to determine if OST Federal Agents meet the conditions and qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission.

What Did the OIG Find?

We found that OST Federal Agents met conditions and qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission. However, we did identify opportunities for improvement. We found that the OST Qualification Tracking System and HRP records contained inconsistent annotations of some requirements. Additionally, we found that the OST *Nuclear Materials Courier Basic Candidate Guide* had not been updated to accurately reflect that training on a specific weapons system was no longer required for OST Federal Agents.

According to an OST official, the OST has not updated the Qualification Tracking System because the organization had been anticipating the implementation of Learning Nucleus to track qualifications for Federal Agents. Additionally, HRP records did not contain reference to extensions given for drug and alcohol testing requirements. As of June 2022, the OST resumed drug and alcohol testing. Finally, the *Nuclear Materials Courier Basic Candidate Guide* requirements were not updated immediately. However, the OST has subsequently provided an updated guide that removed reference to the training no longer required.

What Is the Impact?

Federal Agents are trained on specific skills to transport special nuclear materials securely and safely. These specific skills need to be documented in all systems or records for each Federal Agent to participate in assigned missions.

What Is the Path Forward?

To address the issues identified in this report, we have made one recommendation that, if fully implemented, should help ensure that OST policies and the training tracking system are accurate and current.

BACKGROUND

Since 1947, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and its predecessor agencies have moved nuclear weapons, weapons components, and special nuclear materials by commercial and Government transportation modes. In 1975, the Office of Secure Transportation (OST) was established for the safe and secure transport of Government-owned special nuclear materials in the contiguous U.S. These classified shipments can contain nuclear weapons or components, enriched uranium, or plutonium. Cargo is transported in highly modified secure tractor trailers and escorted by armed Federal Agents in other vehicles who provide security and national incident command system response in emergencies.

Department of Energy Order 473.2A, *Protective Force Operations*, establishes requirements for the management and operation of Department Federal Protective Forces (FPF) and contractor Protective Forces. Armed FPF personnel must comply with the Department's medical, physical readiness, firearms qualifications, and training requirements, as appropriate for their respective position. Additionally, OST Federal Agents must meet the following conditions for assignment to nuclear transportation duties and retention in a Federal Agent position: (1) security clearance; (2) certification in the Human Reliability Program (HRP); (3) a valid State driver's license; (4) initial training; and (5) sustainment training requirements.

The OST has developed and implemented the *Nuclear Materials Courier Basic* (NMCB) *Candidate Guide* and the *Federal Agent Job Analysis manual* (JA), both of which list all OST Federal Agent Nuclear Materials Courier qualification requirements and standards for agents to conduct missions. The OST utilizes the Qualification Tracking System (QTS), which is a web-based database designed to track qualification and currency records for OST employees. Department Order 243.1C, *Records Management Program*, requires that records management controls be present in electronic information systems to ensure the reliability, authenticity, integrity, usability, content, and context of Department records created or received in its business processes.

Additionally, the Secretary of Energy issued a Secretarial Memorandum, dated April 22, 2020, suspending specific safety requirements set forth in Department Order 343.1, *Federal Substance Abuse Testing Program*. On October 27, 2020, the Department extended the suspension until reentry was completed in accordance with the Department's *COVID-19 Workplace Safety and Reentry Framework*.

We initiated this inspection to determine if OST Federal Agents meet the conditions and qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission.

CONDITIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR MISSIONS

We found that the Secretary of Energy's extension granted for examinations, recertifications, and certain training requirements allowed OST Federal Agents to meet conditions and qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission. However, we identified opportunities for improvement. We found that the QTS and HRP records contained inconsistent annotations of some Federal Agent requirements. Additionally, we found that the OST NMCB Candidate

Guide had not been updated to accurately reflect that training on a specific weapons system was no longer required for OST Federal Agents.

Inconsistent Annotations of Requirements in the QTS

We discovered inconsistent annotations of Federal Agent requirements within the QTS. Department Order 243.1C requires that records management controls be present in electronic information systems to ensure the reliability, authenticity, integrity, usability, content, and context of Department records created or received in its business processes. Specifically, we found that training records in the QTS were not reflected as requirements in the JA, as well as an item in the JA that was not reflected in the QTS. The JA is a systematic process used to determine and verify tasks that Federal Agents perform on the job. For example, the requirement for a Federal Agent to perform the “Protective Mask Evaluation” was listed in the Federal Agent’s records within the QTS but was not listed as required training in the JA; the “Demonstrate Radio Protocol” was listed in the JA but was not listed in the QTS; and the “General Employee Radiological” training was listed in the QTS but not the JA.

According to an OST official, the OST has not updated the QTS because the organization had been anticipating the implementation of Learning Nucleus¹ to track Federal Agent qualifications. While discussions between OST officials and the Learning Nucleus team occurred in May 2020, Learning Nucleus was not in place as of May 25, 2022. According to OST personnel, they rely on other records and information in the QTS to determine if Federal Agents are qualified to conduct Nuclear Materials Courier missions. These specific skills need to be documented in all systems or records for each Federal Agent to participate in assigned missions.

Inconsistent Annotations of Requirements in HRP Records

We determined that the OST HRP records did not accurately reflect the extensions the OST was given for HRP drug and alcohol testing requirements. In our sample of 57 HRP records for Federal Agents from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2022, we found that 44 out of 57 records indicated that drug and alcohol testing had not been conducted. While the Department issued a Secretarial Memorandum, dated April 22, 2020, suspending drug and alcohol testing, and later extended the suspension, the HRP records had no annotations that indicated that testing had been done or that suspensions and extensions were in place to alleviate testing from being done. The Department initially issued a Secretarial Memorandum dated April 22, 2020, suspending specific safety requirements set forth in Department Order 343.1, *Federal Substance Abuse Testing Program*. The Department then extended the suspension on October 27, 2020, until reentry was completed in accordance with the Department’s *COVID-19 Workplace Safety and Reentry Framework*. As of May 2022, the Department began drug testing again in a phased approach. Based on subsequent documentation provided by NNSA, drug testing and alcohol requirements resumed for OST Federal Agents as of June 2022.

¹ Learning Nucleus is the Department’s enterprise-wide Learning Management System. Learning Nucleus hosts the Department’s eLearning courses, course feedback, certificates of completion, and student records.

Update to NMCB Candidate Guide

We found that the OST NMCB Candidate Guide did not accurately reflect that training on a specific weapons system was no longer required for OST Federal Agents. Specifically, OST management decided to remove the requirement for Federal Agent candidates to be qualified on the M203 grenade launcher but did not remove the requirement from the NMCB Candidate Guide. According to Department Order 473.2A, FPF members are required to qualify on an approved course for each firearm that is reasonably expected to be used during duty assignments. The OST developed the NMCB Candidate Guide to establish procedures and requirements for those candidates participating in the OST NMCB class. Federal Agents who complete the training should be able to provide safe and secure transportation of nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons components, and special nuclear materials.

According to an OST official on February 16, 2022, a collaborative decision was made between the Acting Manager, Office of Mission Operations, and the Manager, Office of Training and Resources, concerning the M203 weapons system. They decided to remove the qualification requirement for the M203 weapons system for Federal Agent candidates and replace it with a grenade launcher familiarization fire. The decision was made by OST management to update the requirement starting with the NMBC Class 10-22 because the M203 weapons system qualification standard, as applied to Federal Agent candidates in the NMCB Candidate Guide, was not needed, did not impact mission operations, and was not a requirement suitable for Federal Agent candidates.

OST management reported that the NMCB Candidate Guide requirements change throughout the year; however, the guide is only updated annually. Subsequently, OST management provided us an updated NMCB Candidate Guide in July of 2022 that reflects Federal Agents will conduct familiarization fire with the grenade launcher.

IMPACT

Federal Agents are trained on specific skills to transport special nuclear materials securely and safely. These specific skills need to be documented in all systems or records for each Federal Agent to participate in assigned missions.

RECOMMENDATION

To address the issue identified in our report, we recommend that the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, NNSA:

1. Ensure that information in the QTS reflects required training for Federal Agents.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Management fully concurred with our recommendation. Management appreciated the Office of Inspector General's confirmation that OST Federal Agents met the conditions and qualifications needed to perform required mission work. To address the inspectors' observations and

recommendation, the OST enhanced alignment between training records by conducting a thorough crosswalk between the JA, the OST Manual (M) 3.19, *Employee Training and Qualification Requirements*, and the QTS to verify data accuracy. The QTS Working Group now conducts annual crosswalks to ensure that changes in employee training are accurately documented in the QTS. Management does not believe the minor annotation observations have led to the assignment of an unqualified agent. NNSA considers the report's recommendation closed based on the actions taken.

Management's comments are included in Appendix 2

INSPECTOR COMMENTS

We commend NNSA for taking action to address concerns identified with the QTS. We conclude that the stated actions taken will help ensure that OST Federal Agents' specific skills are documented in all systems or records for each Federal Agent to participate in assigned missions.

Appendix 1: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

OBJECTIVE

We initiated this inspection to determine if the Office of Secure Transportation's (OST) Federal Agents meet the conditions and qualifications needed to perform work required to support their mission.

SCOPE

The inspection was performed from November 2021 through February 2023 at the OST Transportation and Emergency Control Centers located in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Amarillo, Texas; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee. We reviewed relevant information from fiscal year 2019 through fiscal year 2021 pertaining to the qualifications of OST Federal Agents to perform work required to support their mission. The inspection was conducted under Office of Inspector General project number S22HQ005.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our inspection objective, we:

- Reviewed Federal, Department of Energy, and OST requirements;
- Reviewed requirements for Federal Agents, Federal Protective Force Personnel, Protective Force training, weapons qualification, records management, the Human Reliability Program, as well as drug and alcohol testing;
- Reviewed and analyzed Human Reliability Program records and training records for Federal Agents;
- Reviewed related reports, memorandums, e-mails, and documents regarding Federal Agents, Federal Protective Force Personnel, Protective Force training, weapons qualification, records management, the Human Reliability Program, as well as drug and alcohol testing; and
- Conducted interviews with OST management and the Qualification Tracking System administrator.

We conducted our inspection in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020) as put forth by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. We believe that the work performed provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Management officials waived an exit conference.

Appendix 2: Management Comments



Department of Energy
Under Secretary for Nuclear Security
Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585



April 27, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR TERI L. DONALDSON
INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

FROM:

JILL HRUBY

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Hruby".

SUBJECT:

Response to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Draft Report, *The Office of Secure Transportation's Agent Qualifications for Work Performance and Missions (S22HQ005)*

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the subject draft report. We appreciate the OIG's confirmation that Office of Secure Transportation (OST) Federal Agents met the conditions and qualifications needed to perform required mission work.

To address the inspectors' observations and recommendation, OST enhanced alignment between training records by conducting a thorough crosswalk between the Federal Agent Job Analysis Manual, OST Manual (M) 3.19, *Employee Training and Qualification Requirements*, and the Qualification Tracking System (QTS) to verify data accuracy. The QTS Working Group now conducts annual crosswalks to assure changes in employee training are accurately documented in QTS. Although we appreciate the opportunity to improve our process, we do not believe the minor annotation observations have led to the assignment of an unqualified agent. The National Nuclear Security Administration considers the report's recommendation closed based on the actions taken.

Technical comments to further enhance the accuracy and clarity of the report have been provided to the auditors under separate cover. If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Mr. Dean Childs, Director, Audits and Internal Affairs, at (202) 836-3327.

FEEDBACK

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