



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
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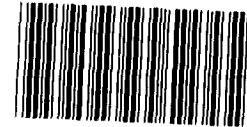
RESOURCES, COMMUNITY,
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION

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B-208094

RELEASED

The Honorable Charles H. Percy
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy,
Nuclear Proliferation and
Government Processes
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate



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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: Update of Department of Energy Staffing Levels
Under the Assistant Secretary for Conservation
and Renewable Energy (GAO/RCED-83-177)

On May 10, 1983, you requested an update of staffing levels contained in our July 19, 1982, report on the impacts of staffing losses on programs administered by the Department of Energy's (DOE's) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy.¹ You also requested information on DOE's progress in spending fiscal year 1983 funds appropriated for conservation, renewable energy, fossil energy, and nuclear energy programs and on our past recommendations on improving DOE operations which have not been adopted by DOE. This report updates our July 1982 report. Information on DOE's fiscal year 1983 spending progress and on our open recommendations will be provided separately.

In our July report, we noted that the number of staff in offices administering State and local assistance programs and conservation and renewable energy research and development programs had been reduced by 250. We also reported that many of the staff still on-board were newly assigned to their positions, resulting in a loss of administrative continuity and experience. In addition, we reported that for many programs, staffing reductions and personnel changes had adversely affected program management.

During consideration of a supplemental fiscal year 1982 appropriation request for DOE, the Congress expressed its concern over personnel reductions and their resulting effects on

¹"Loss of Experienced Staff Affects Conservation and Renewable Energy Programs" (GAO/EMD-82-100, July 19, 1982).

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program administration within the Department. In responding to this situation, the Congress established minimum staffing levels to be maintained by DOE in selected program areas as part of DOE's supplemental fiscal year 1982 appropriations enacted in September 1982 (Public Law 97-257). With respect to DOE's conservation and renewable energy programs, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy is to maintain a minimum staffing level of 352 full-time, permanent employees, of which at least 154 are to be assigned to conservation research and development activities and at least 180 are to be assigned to State and local conservation activities.²

Overall, our followup work showed that total staffing under DOE's Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy have declined from the total reported in our last report--from 421 in April 1982 to 373 as of May 2, 1983, the latest information available at the time of our work. In addition, DOE has not achieved required staffing levels for program areas subject to congressionally established minimum staffing levels. As of the end of April 1983, according to DOE data, staff in affected program areas totaled 326 compared with the required minimum number of 352.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of our work were to determine (1) staffing trends for DOE's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy Programs since April 1982, the time of our previous work, and (2) the extent to which DOE has complied with staffing requirements for those program areas affected by legislatively required minimum staffing levels.

Our work included discussions with DOE officials in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy and examination of staffing level data routinely collected and reported by program offices in headquarters and, with respect to State and local assistance programs, DOE Operations offices. We also examined monthly staffing level reports prepared from the DOE-wide Energy Manpower Personnel Resource Information System. We did not verify the accuracy of the staffing level information obtained from these documents.

²The minimum staffing levels relate to those program activities under the Office of Assistant Secretary which receive appropriations from the Interior appropriations subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Some program areas under the Assistant Secretary receive appropriations from other appropriations subcommittees. Thus, staffing level information contained in tables 1 and 3 of this report are not directly comparable.

At the request of your office, we did not take the additional time necessary to obtain agency comments on the information contained in this report. We did, however, discuss the report's contents with DOE officials and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

With the exceptions noted above, we performed our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

RECENT STAFFING TRENDS

Total staffing under DOE's Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy has been reduced by 48 since April 1982. However, since January 1983, total staffing appears to have stabilized at a level of 373 permanent, full-time staff. Table 1 shows total staffing by organizational unit for the Office of Assistant Secretary on April 30, 1982, May 2, 1983 (the latest information available), and at selected points in between.

Table 1

Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy
Staffing Trends - April 30, 1982, to May 2, 1983

	Employees ^a on board as of			
	<u>Apr. 30, 1982</u>	<u>Oct. 4, 1982</u>	<u>Jan. 31, 1983</u>	<u>May 2, 1983</u>
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy	8	8	8	9
Office of Policy and Management	52	40	38	40
Office of Alcohol Fuels	15	12	12	12
Office of Power Marketing Coordination	14	14	12	11
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Conservation	146	137	130	134
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Renewable Energy	132	126	119	111
Office of State and Local Assistance Programs	<u>54</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>56</u>
Total	<u>421</u>	<u>391</u>	<u>373</u>	<u>373</u>

^aIncludes full-time, permanent staff only.

Source: DOE Conservation and Renewable Energy Strength Reports.

In addition to its headquarters staff, DOE also has assigned full-time, permanent staff from its Operations offices to carry out various activities under its State and local assistance programs. These staff, as well as DOE headquarters staff assigned to the Office of State and Local Assistance Programs, are to be considered when determining whether DOE is meeting the minimum staffing level required for administering State and local assistance programs. As shown in table 2, the number of staff administering these programs in the Operations offices has increased since April 1982.

Table 2

State and Local Assistance Programs
Staffing Levels - April 30, 1982, to May 2, 1983

	Employees on board as of				
	<u>Apr. 30, 1982</u>	<u>Jan. 31, 1983</u>	<u>May 2, 1983</u>		
Office of State and Local Assistance Programs at headquarters	54	54			56
Operations offices					
Albuquerque	19				21
Chicago	50				50
Idaho Falls	7				12
Richland	9				11
San Francisco	14				15
Savannah River	<u>10</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>116^a</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>121</u>
Total	<u>163</u>	<u>170</u>			<u>177</u>

^aStaff level breakdown for specific Operations offices was not readily available.

Source: DOE Conservation and Renewable Energy Strength Reports.

According to a DOE official in the Office of Policy and Management, the overall decrease in number of staff under the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy which occurred between April 30, 1982, and May 2, 1983, generally resulted from attrition and a reduction-in-force of Senior Executive Service staff. According to one official, DOE did not actively recruit new staff to fill vacancies under the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Renewable Energy. However, following enactment of DOE's supplemental appropriations act for fiscal year 1982, which established minimum staffing levels to carry out energy conservation activities, DOE initiated recruitment actions in program areas affected by these minimum levels.

As of early May 1983, we were told that DOE had 18 to 20 active recruitment actions underway.

DOE COMPLIANCE WITH MANDATED STAFFING MINIMUMS

As pointed out earlier, legislation enacted in September 1982 established minimum staffing levels for certain program areas under DOE's Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy. Based on DOE monthly reports showing on-board staff in areas subject to staffing minimums, as of April 30, 1983, DOE had not achieved the staffing levels called for in legislation, although the number of staff has increased slightly since November 1982. According to the April 30, 1983, report, the number of staff on board was 26 persons below the congressionally established staffing minimum. Table 3 compares DOE's on-board staff in program areas subject to the staffing minimums with the established staffing minimums.

Table 3

Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy
Staffing Levels for Activities Subject to Minimum
Staffing Levels Under Public Law 97-257

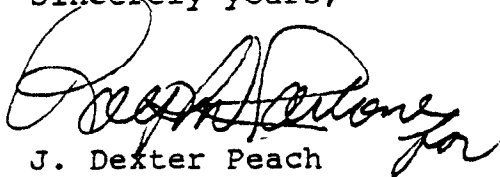
	Minimum staffing levels	Employees on board as of		
		Nov. 30, 1982	Jan. 31, 1983	Apr. 30, 1983
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy	352	321	321	326
Conservation Research and Development	154	158	154	151
State and Local Conservation Activities	180	163	167	175

A DOE official stated that the major constraint in meeting the staffing minimums has been the time needed to carry out established procedures for hiring qualified personnel. We were told that recruitment activities were initiated following establishment of the staffing minimums and that this activity was expedited in late March and April 1983.

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As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from its date of issuance. At that time, we will send copies to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Energy; and other interested parties.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Dexter Peach".

J. Dexter Peach
Director