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Mr. Howard G. Hembree, Chief
Safety Engineering & Test Branch
Division of Reactor Development
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D.C.

RFD-1

Dear Howard:

It has become necessary to reschedule the RFD-1 test from mid-March to mid-April. A careful analysis has shown that it is no longer possible to complete the laboratory and aircraft drop test programs in time for the March flight. These tests are designed to increase the probability of success of the flight and are therefore essential. It has been calculated that it is worth around $100,000 to increase the probability of success of the flight by two percent.

The primary cause for the slip has been the accumulated effect of delays in delivery of flight test material. Many of the delays have been accommodated by compressing and overlapping test phases. However, the point has now been reached where this is no longer possible. Delivery of the onboard tape recorder and the main system timer and decoder, will be about two weeks late. In addition, the accidental destruction of two of the re-entry vehicles during fabrication, has caused a 2-week delay in availability of RV's. These delays simply could not be accommodated without deletion of necessary tests.

The important tests remaining to be run in the next seven weeks are:

1. At least three laboratory test run-throughs of complete flight test re-entry systems with all live hardware. These tests will include the two actual flight test systems to be used for re-entry tests.

2. Tower drops into water for evaluations of impact switches and flotation gear.

3. A radiant heat test of an RV, programed to follow an actual re-entry heat pulse, followed immediately by immersion in cold water to examine structural integrity of the RV.

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4. Sled tests to prove acceptable drogue gun performance, chute deployment, reefing cutter performance, flotation bag fill, and SARAH beacon antenna deployment.

5. An instrumented Tonopah air drop of the system to be used in the Wallops air drop.

6. Five Wallops air drops that start with simple RV systems to check primarily the performance of chutes and flotation gear. The final two air drops will be of complete live systems that insofar as practical are identical to the actual flight systems.

There is no way to accomplish this testing in a 3-week period.

V. E. Blake

V. E. Blake
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