

[SOE LETTERHEAD]

May 12, 1993

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Conway:

Your letter of March 23, 1993, forwarded the Defense nuclear Facilities Safety Board's Recommendation 93-2 concerning the Department's nuclear criticality experiments program. We agree with the Board that it is important to improve and maintain a criticality control information base, especially to support future situations that may be encountered in handling, processing, and storing or disposing of fissionable material. We recognize that it is necessary to retain a cadre of individuals competent in practicing criticality control and safety. The Department also agrees that it is important to continue an experimental program of general purpose critical experiments and to continue an education program for criticality safety professionals.

As part of the Department's efforts to retain its program of general purpose criticality experiments, we recognize the need to coordinate the criticality program among the various users. The Department will perform a critically needs assessment with respect to the defense nuclear facilities to determine the scope of current and future requirements for criticality experiments, predictability, and training. The assessment will be reviewed and used by our technical staff to develop an Implementation Plan that will define and implement needed improvements to the criticality experiments, predictability, and training program.

Based on the above, the Department accepts the Board's recommendation, with the recognition that mission requirements and program funding after fiscal year 1994 have not yet been identified. Recommendation 93-2 and future landlord Issues will be revisited as part of our internal budget and planning processes for fiscal year 1995. We will keep you apprised of our activities in these areas.

The Office of Defense Programs, in consultation with the other applicable program offices, will develop the Department's Implementation Plan for Recommendation 93-2. We will submit this plan to the Board no later than August 10, 1993.

Sincerely,

Hazel R. O'Leary