

[DNFSB LETTERHEAD]

December 5, 1995

The Honorable Hazel R. O'Leary
Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary O'Leary:

In the Implementation Plan for Board Recommendation 94-5, dated July 21, 1995, the Department of Energy (DOE) committed to provide the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) with a revised Functions and Responsibilities (FAR) Manual by February 1, 1996. This Manual, by which DOE defines the safety roles and responsibilities of DOE organizational elements, has long been out-of-date. You recall when the Board raised this at our Quarterly Review Meeting on August 10, 1995, you instructed that the Manual be updated to conform to current responsibilities.

Between January and September 1995, the Hanford contractor operated outside its safety authorization basis for the Tank Farms by routinely conducting transfers of material exceeding criticality specifications. In November 1995 DOE-Richland identified inadequately defined roles and responsibilities as a root cause for this occurrence. Examples such as this suggest that the FAR Manual is urgently needed to carefully delineate the safety responsibilities between Headquarters and field elements. The Board requests that DOE take all reasonable measures to complete the development of the Manual by the date specified or earlier and then take immediate steps to implement its provisions.

Having monitored DOE's efforts, the Board lacks confidence at present that the schedule in the implementation plan will be met. Accordingly, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requests that DOE provide the following within 10 days of receiving this letter:

1. A status report on the progress made to carry out the identified commitment.
2. Identification of the DOE individual responsible for leading the task and a description of how it has been organized.
3. Interim milestones for the following:
 - a. Date that the draft FAR Manual will be submitted to DOE management.
 - b. Date that the draft FAR Manual will be given to the Board.
4. Identification of actions to be taken to implement the Manual at defense nuclear facilities that include distribution of the Manual and the training of personnel.

These milestones should be chosen to culminate in the submittal of the final report to the Board by February 1, 1996.

If the DOE personnel responsible for meeting the deadline have questions concerning this

letter, please direct them to Dr. Lester Ettliger (202/208-6439) of the Board's staff.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark Whitaker