

[DNFSB LETTERHEAD]

December 17, 1996

The Honorable Alvin L. Alm
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0113

Dear Mr. Alm:

One of the earliest actions of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) was to recommend that the Department of Energy (DOE) improve the characterization and monitoring of the ferrocyanide-bearing wastes stored in various underground storage tanks at the Hanford site. The Board recognized the potentially explosive ferrocyanide as a serious safety issue requiring DOE's high-priority attention.

The Board has reviewed DOE's report *Assessment of the Potential for Ferrocyanide Propagating Reaction Accidents*, submitted to the Board to fulfill commitment 5.4.3.2.a of the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 93-5. The Board finds that the report adequately shows the ferrocyanide compounds in the tanks have aged appreciably and have degraded into relatively inert compounds incapable of sustaining a propagating reaction. Therefore, the Board concurs with DOE's action to remove the remaining tanks from the ferrocyanide watch list and close the ferrocyanide safety issue. Additionally, the Board considers commitment 5.4.3.2.a to be closed and expects no further reporting on the ferrocyanide safety program. The Board understands that the former ferrocyanide tanks will continue to be monitored in accordance with the existing authorization basis for the tank farms.

The Board recognizes that diligent characterization, experimentation, and theoretical analysis have resulted in the technical basis for closing this issue. The scientists and engineers responsible for this work are to be congratulated. The Board considers this work a model to be followed in investigating and ultimately resolving the remaining safety issues at the Hanford tank farms.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: The Honorable Hazel R. O'Leary
The Honorable Thomas P. Grumbly
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.
Mr. John Wagoner