

[DNFSB LETTERHEAD]

January 31, 1996

The Honorable Thomas P. Grumbly
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management
Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585-0113

Dear Mr. Grumbly:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) issued Recommendation 94-1 in May 1994. The Department of Energy (DOE) accepted this recommendation and submitted an implementation plan in February 1995. The schedule commitments in the DOE implementation plan reflected a common understanding for the need to remediate many plutonium-bearing materials without delay, including some residues at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (RFETS). The Board accepted the Recommendation 94-1 Implementation Plan with the understanding that the DOE would aggressively move to meet the projected milestones.

The Board notes that RFETS made substantial progress in the latter half of 1995 by venting drums, repackaging Pu in contact with plastic, and draining some tanks. These actions have significantly reduced some of the hazards at RFETS. The Board also acknowledges the effective interface established between the Board's staff and the DOE's 94-1 Project Organization, the Nuclear Materials Stabilization Task Group (EM-66). We believe this interface has been instrumental in effecting the Recommendation 94-1 implementation process throughout the complex, as was evident during the recent meeting at RFETS on January 25.

The Implementation Plan committed the DOE to process all high-risk residues at RFETS on an expedited schedule. The Implementation Plan provided for development of an independent characterization program, and interim storage criteria which were to be completed in parallel with material processing. However, information supplied to the Board's staff and the DOE indicate strongly that the May 1997 implementation plan milestones will not be met.

The Board believes that implementation has been delayed to a point where expedited recovery of the schedule is needed with immediate and sustained attention by senior DOE management. Therefore, the Board requests that DOE prepare a detailed recovery plan. The recovery plan should provide specific FY96 and FY97 performance measures for the RFETS integrating contractor which are consistent with the Recommendation 94-1 Implementation Plan. The performance measures should reflect intermediate milestones where necessary to ensure that Implementation Plan milestones will be met. The Board requests that this recovery plan be submitted within thirty days.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark Whitaker