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## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20004  
(202) 208-6400



May 9, 1996

The Honorable Thomas P. Grumbly  
Under Secretary of Energy  
Washington, D.C. 20585-1000

Dear Mr. Grumbly:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) continues to provide safety oversight of the Department of Energy (DOE) activities at the Hanford Site. A team of the Board's staff recently completed a technical review of the B-Plant exhaust ventilation system HEPA filter units. A copy of their report is enclosed.

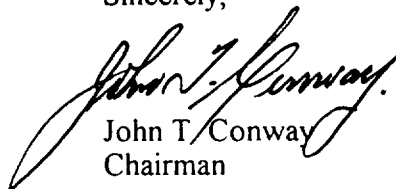
The B-Plant has six HEPA filter units: three units are retired, one is operational, one is in standby, and one is partially assembled. A large amount of radioactive exposure has accumulated on the retired and operational HEPA filters. Safety considerations of this radioactive exposure and its resultant degradation have led to the retirement of three HEPA filter units. Even though the units are retired, they continue to degrade. The operating HEPA filter unit also has a significant radioactive inventory and an accumulated exposure comparable to that of the retired units. It is also showing signs of possible degradation. These matters are addressed in the technical review along with the following issues:

- The integrity of the operating HEPA filter
- Potential risks associated with continued use
- Remediation plans for the retired HEPA filter units
- Criteria for HEPA filter operational limitations

The Board requests that it be kept informed as to DOE's resolution of the safety issues set forth in the report.

If your staff has any questions concerning the report, Dr. Roger Zavadoski of our staff can be reached at 208-6407.

Sincerely,

  
John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: The Honorable Tara O'Toole  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker Jr.  
Ms. Jill Lytle  
Mr. John Wagoner

Enclosure