

[DOE (GERMANTOWN, MD) LETTERHEAD]

March 21, 1996

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

Dear Mr. Conway:

I am responding to your March 6, 1996, letter to Dr. Reis. Nuclear explosive safety studies (NESS) performed by the Nevada Operations Office (NV) have generally improved over the past 2 years. However, as your letter and the enclosed staff trip report attest, the cited study on the Coded Optical Device Enabling System (CODES) had shortcomings. In fact, my staff and your staff made quite similar observations on this particular study on the adequacy of technical information and on the way in which the study was conducted. We have been actively working with NV staff to correct these problems. As a minimum, my staff has requested, and NV has agreed, that the CODES study will be upgraded to meet established requirements before it will be considered for my approval. My staff has also discussed the CODES study deficiencies with the NV Assistant Manager for Operations and the Director of the Nuclear Explosive Safety Division. We are all working together to address the issues you have raised.

I am convinced that on the broader issue of the path forward to improve the NESS process, NV staff have not only been fully participants in this effort, but have demonstrated leadership and a "can-do" approach. NV has been making improvements and discarding old ways of doing business where those ways no longer properly serve new requirements.

If you have questions, please call me or have your staff contact Barry Rich of my staff at 301-903-1864.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Seitz
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Military Application and Stockpile Management
Defense Programs

cc:

M. Whitaker, S-3.1
V. Stello, DP-3
T. Vaeth, NVO