

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

November 5, 1996

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Our Recommendation 94-1 commitments to, "thermally stabilize the existing backlog of all known reactive plutonium oxide (estimated 63 kilograms)" and "repackage 1,602 items of plutonium metal not in direct contact with, but in proximity to, plastic at Rocky Flats by October 31, 1996," (Implementation Plan milestones 3.2012 and 3.2-021) will be missed by four weeks. Approximately 2 kilograms of plutonium oxide remain to be stabilized and 174 plutonium metal items in proximity to plastic must still be repackaged. All the higher risk items in direct contact with plastic have already been repackaged. I expect these tasks to be completed no later than December 2, 1996. As the Nuclear Materials Stabilization Task Group already discussed with your staff, the missed milestones are due to criticality concerns regarding the storage of fissile material in the Building 371 stacker/retriever and the storage of moderated residues in other vaults. Existing analysis did not adequately model either the physical conditions of the stacker/retriever or the material configurations that were in storage. Some of the items requiring repackaging are stored in vaults containing moderated residues and cannot be moved until evaluations verify that it is safe to do so. These issues were resolved in late October 1996.

I want to strongly communicate our resolve to meet all Recommendation 94-1 commitments. I take these commitments very seriously and hold my staff and contractors accountable for their completion. I intend to closely track progress in meeting our commitments at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Alm

Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management