

**[DOE LETTERHEAD]**

February 2, 1997

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In the Department of Energy's Implementation Plan, Revision I, for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Recommendation 94-2, commitment VII.B.1 is to issue policies addressing critical assumptions and clarifications for performance assessments. This commitment was due January 31, 1997. I apologize for this slight delay. The Department has already issued interim policy and guidance on these topics through the *Interim Format and Content Guide, and Standard Review Plan for the U.S. Department of Energy Low-Level Waste Disposal Facility Performance Assessments*, November 1, 1996. At that time, we noted that the document was interim because of the strong overlap of this guidance with both the Department's proposed rule, *Radiation Protection of the Public and the Environment* (10 CFR 834) and the revision of the DOE radioactive waste management Order (5820.2A).

Because interim direction has been provided to the field, and to facilitate completion of the DOE radioactive waste management Order revision effort, we propose that the commitment be deferred until February 28, 1997 so that certain key topics can be resolved. The completed critical assumptions deliverable would be issued coincident with issuance of the Low-level waste essential requirements and guidance deliverables under commitment VI.B.5, which are due February 28, 1997. I believe that this approach meets the intent of the commitment made by the Department and ensures a higher quality overall effort.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have a member of your staff contact Mark Frei, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Waste Management, at 202-586-0370.

Sincerely,

***Alvin L. Alm***  
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management

cc: M. Whitaker, S-3.1