

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

February 5, 1997

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department's April 9, 1996, letter to the Board responded to their concerns over the in-process highly enriched uranium (HEU) materials stored in Building 9212, at the Oak Ridge Y-12 Plant. The letter also described the operational upgrades which are now in progress in anticipation of restart of enriched uranium operations (EUO), and the Department's intention to conduct an HEU vulnerability assessment. The site assessment work was completed in August 1996. Reports were prepared for each site, and an overall summary report was released by the Secretary on January 15, 1997. The assessment identified a total of 155 vulnerabilities, 21 of which were classified as "most significant" for the Department of Energy complex. Of these most significant vulnerabilities, four are associated with Building 9212 at the Y-12 Plant. Additionally, Building 9212 was classified as one of ten "most vulnerable" facilities of the total 175 facilities assessed. The results of the assessment have given the Department added reason to increase its determination to restart EUO with the intent of resuming enriched uranium processing in conjunction with other programmatic priorities. The vulnerability assessment report discusses the issues at Y-12, and supersedes our response to the Board dated April 9, 1996. The management plan/corrective actions are being prepared.

In the interim, the Office of Defense Programs has been assigned the lead to prepare a management plan for remediation of all the Department's HEU vulnerabilities and track the corrective actions to closure. The vulnerabilities at the Y-12 Plant, particularly those in Building 9212, will receive continued attention. I have enclosed a copy (Enclosure 1) of the assessment report which details the results and conclusions for the entire assessment, of which the Y-12 Plant was a part. Additionally, I have enclosed a copy (Enclosure 2) of the November 20, 1996, memorandum from Mr. Seitz to Mr. Hall which requests a plan for the management of HEU materials at the Y-12 Site. A copy of the management plan dealing with the identified vulnerabilities and for the in-process materials will similarly be transmitted when they are issued.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Phil Aiken at 301-903-4513 of my staff.

Sincerely,

Victor H. Reis
Assistant Secretary for Defense Programs

2 Enclosures

cc w/o enclosures:
T. Grumbly, US