

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

October 21, 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:

In response to your letter of September 12, 1997, concerning lightning protection for collocated high explosives and nuclear materials at the Pantex Plant, the Department of Energy has formed the Lightning Protection Project Team (LPT). The LPT is being led by the Amarillo Area Office (AAO) and includes representatives from Defense Programs (DP), Albuquerque Operations Office (AL), Sandia National Laboratories, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), and Mason & Hanger Corporation. Enclosure 1 is the memorandum forming the LPT initially. Since its issuance, Mr. Dick Yactor (LANL) has been assigned to the LPT. The LPT has been tasked with analyzing the hazards presented by lightning to nuclear explosives operations at Pantex and implementing the controls necessary to mitigate that threat.

The LPT met on October 9, 1997, at Pantex to develop a draft project plan, Enclosure 2, to which the LPT is currently working. This plan will be submitted to the Management Team (MT) for approval. The MT will have appropriate membership from DP, AL and the AAO. Defense Programs is coordinating a lessons-learned effort to assure that the Integrated Safety Process (ISP) implementation at Pantex takes into account the recent dynamic balancer experience.

The LPT has divided the task into four phases: hazard analysis, threat assessment, controls, and implementation. Consistent with the ISP approach, the results of each phase will be submitted to the MT for approval and the Independent Review Team for technical review. Upon completion of the first three phases of the effort, the team will submit a report addressing the threat from lightning, the controls necessary to mitigate the threat, and a plan for the implementation and maintenance of these controls. The Board staff will be kept apprised of the LPT's progress and is invited and encouraged to attend any of their meetings.

To allow the LPT sufficient time to appropriately apply the ISP process, I am requesting an extension for submitting the requested technical report until February 20, 1998. Should you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact David Chaney at (301) 903-8308.

Sincerely,

Gene Ives

Gene Ives
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Military Application and
Stockpile Management
Defense Programs

2 Enclosures