

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

12 May 1997

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

Dear Chairman Conway:

The Department of Energy Implementation Plan, submitted in response to Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Recommendation 94-1, included a commitment to repackage all separated plutonium metal and oxide to meet the *Criteria for Safe Storage of Plutonium Metals and Oxides*, DOE-STD-3013-94, by May 2002. To that end, the Department initiated procurement of standardized plutonium stabilization and packaging equipment suites to fulfill this commitment at the major sites possessing significant quantities of the material at issue. The first suite of equipment will be delivered to the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site in June 1997.

In the interim, the Storage and Disposition of Weapons-Usable Fissile Materials Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision (S&D PEIS ROD) was issued. The S&D PEIS ROD provides definitive disposition paths for this material that were not available when we made our Recommendation 94-1 commitment to repackage plutonium metal and oxide for long term storage. The ROD narrows the disposition alternatives while offering the possibility of disposition of this material earlier than initially anticipated, such that the Department's need to meet a long term storage standard may no longer be the most prudent plan from a technical and budgetary standpoint. Consequently, we intend to conduct a trade study to analyze the best path forward to integrate the new disposition decisions and our commitment to complete packaging and safe storage of plutonium metal and oxide in accordance with approved criteria.

We intend to complete the trade study no later than August 1, 1997. Until the Department acts on the study's final conclusions and recommendations, we remain committed to the Recommendation 94-1 Implementation Plan as written. The Board is invited to provide representation to the trade study and to participate in development of the study's final recommendation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Mr. John Tseng, Acting Director, Nuclear Materials Stabilization Task Group, at 202/586-0383.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Alm
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management