



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

November 20, 1998

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:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your Recommendation 98-2, issued on September 30, 1998, and published in the Federal Register on October 7, 1998, dealing with Safety Management at the Pantex Plant. The Department accepts Recommendation 98-2 and will develop an Implementation Plan to the following approach:

- 1) The activities undertaken in the Implementation Plan will be aimed at simplifying and standardizing activity level safety management processes for all work involving nuclear explosives at the Pantex Plant. Implementation Plan activities involving Nuclear Explosive Safety Studies will also be focused on simplification and standardization of practices and processes. Overall, the objective of the Implementation Plan will be to ensure practical and timely implementation of safety improvements and will better allow for tailoring of SS-21 principles.
- 2) The Department recognizes the need to modify the existing change control process in order to improve process efficiency and consistency. An efficient process to tailor the amount of rigor involved in implementing changes while maintaining an adequate safety margin will be pursued.
- 3) Roles, responsibilities and authorities will be clarified so that the Pantex contractor is accountable for the adequacy of nuclear explosive operations and safety documentation at the Pantex Plant. In doing so, the Pantex contractor will have the ability to call on the technical expertise of the National Laboratories.

- 4) The Department recognizes the need to clarify the independent role of the Nuclear Explosive Safety Studies Groups. The Nuclear Explosive Safety Studies should focus on a scope of work established by line management and approved by the appropriate Department of Energy Authorization Official.
- 5) The Department will develop and implement options necessary to sustain a technically competent Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Group talent pool.
- 6) The Department recognizes the need to pursue the safety management enhancement sought in Recommendation 98-2 consistent with the development of the Pantex Integrated Safety Management System as part of the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 95-2.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Application and Stockpile Management, Defense Programs, is the Responsible Manager for the preparation of the Implementation Plan. He will work with you to develop an acceptable plan, meeting our mutual expectations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Richardson