



The Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

May 5, 1998

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter expressing your concerns about the Department's progress on the implementation plan for remediation of nuclear material vulnerabilities, developed in response to Board recommendation 94-1, "Improved Schedule for Remediation in the Defense Nuclear Facilities Complex."

As you recognized in your annual report to Congress, we have made significant progress in mitigating the most urgent risks over the past three years since initial plan issuance in February 1995. The stabilization program has moved into a phase that requires extensive integration among deactivation programs, disposition programs, and active weapons programs. Significant changes since establishment of the initial plan include Stockpile Stewardship, Disposition of Weapons Usable Fissile Materials, and Accelerated Cleanup. The overall stabilization plan needs to be updated to be consistent with these policy decisions and to focus integration across organizations.

In light of the above-mentioned developments, we are taking the steps necessary to develop a revised, fully integrated and optimized 94-1 implementation plan. Ongoing technical studies of topics such as accelerating plutonium shipments, obtaining variances from safeguards requirements where appropriate, and establishing comprehensive fissile material storage standards (other than DOE-STD-3013-96), have potential significant impacts on the planned stabilization activities and will need to be factored into the revision. Finally, we are in the process of completing the environmental impact statement for Rocky Flats plutonium residues. Considering the magnitude of these efforts necessary for developing a comprehensive plan revision, we do not anticipate completion of the revised implementation plan before December 1998.

On the issue of management of this implementation plan, we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our management approach. At this time, we believe that the current management structure and approach can effectively meet the Department's needs. Mr. John Tseng is tasked with developing a comprehensive plan revision that is practicable and has the necessary support and commitment of the affected programs. He is also responsible for working directly with program

offices and providing recommendations for integration of implementation activities across programs and sites. In fulfilling these duties, he has the responsibility and authority to escalate plan revision and implementation matters to the appropriate level of management for resolution. Additionally, I have directed Mr. Mark Whitaker, Departmental Representative to the Board, to advise me and Deputy Secretary Moler of significant safety issues that need our attention to achieve satisfactory resolution. The Deputy Secretary will have the responsibility for resolving any cross-organizational disagreements on plan implementation.

Let me assure you that we appreciate the importance of timely remediation and ultimate disposition of the hazardous materials addressed in the 94-1 implementation plan. We appreciate your continued monitoring of our efforts on these activities and look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Mr. Tseng will be available to provide briefings to the Board and staff on the progress of revision efforts. We are working with our field staff to review planned near-term changes to the existing implementation plan and expect to provide these changes to you shortly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Federico Peña". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.

Federico Peña