



## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

February 9, 2000

The Honorable John T. Conway  
Chairman,  
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board  
625 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your review of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory facilities used for uranium-233 operations and long term storage. As documented in your letter of November 2, 1999, this review focused on the ventilation systems in the Building 3019 complex.

In coordination with the Office of Defense Programs, we are evaluating two filtration options for the Vessel Off Gas (VOG) system that serves the uranium-233 storage vaults. In the event that a container of uranium-233 were to be breached, either option would ensure that the bulk of material released would be trapped locally. This will minimize contamination of long runs of ductwork and reduce the potential for worker exposures. The addition of filtration will be implemented before the inspection and handling of containers that contain dispersible powders with high concentrations of the isotope that is the source of the significant gamma radiation associated with uranium-233.

A safety evaluation is being prepared to assess the risks and potential consequences posed by legacy chemicals and radionuclides in the facility ventilation systems. These evaluations will be supported by additional data collection, as required. This evaluation will be documented as part of the facility authorization basis before inspection activities commence.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at 202-586-7709 or Mr. David Huizenga, Responsible Manager for Recommendation 97-1, at 202-586-5151.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Carolyn L. Huntoon in cursive.

Carolyn L. Huntoon  
Assistant Secretary for  
Environmental Management

cc: M. Whitaker, S-3.1  
T. Gioconda, DP-1  
E. Cumesty, DOE-OR  
M. Kohring, ORNL