

John T. Conway, Chairman  
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## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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January 23, 2001



General John A. Gordon  
Administrator of the  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear General Gordon:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) is interested in the effort being made by BWXT Y-12 and the Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) to address long-standing safety issues at the Y-12 National Nuclear Complex. Senior managers for BWXT Y-12 have indicated to the Board that their initial safety-related activities will focus on three major areas: Integrated Safety Management (ISM), modernization, and Enriched Uranium Operations restart.

It may be noted that the above three areas are closely correlated with a number of issues at Y-12 that have been the subject of several letters from the Board during the last year. These issues include problems with project management of the new Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility and the Hydrogen Fluoride Supply System, the fire protection program, resumption of the reduction process for Enriched Uranium Operations, and implementation of ISM.

The enclosure to this letter identifies several additional unresolved issues at Y-12 that are being tracked by the Board and its staff. The Board understands that resolution of these complex and broad issues will require sustained efforts by DOE/NNSA and BWXT Y-12 in addition to the initial activities discussed above. We look forward to a briefing in January 2001 from the DOE/NNSA Y-12 Area Manager on the status of ISM. We anticipate continuing interactions on all the topics discussed in the enclosure, perhaps during a visit by the Board in March 2001, after BWXT Y-12 has had an opportunity to complete more of its plans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John T. Conway".

John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mr. William Brumley  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.

Enclosure

**Enclosure**  
**OPEN ISSUES, Y-12 National Security Complex**

<b>Date of Board Letter</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Expected Action(s)</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Comments</b>
October 31, 2000	Review of Building 9206 Deactivation and Risk Reduction Activities at Oak Ridge Y-12 Plant	DOE briefing on the resolution of technical safety issues, plans for reducing hazards in Building 9206, and proposals for accelerating the schedule.	Not specified	This issue has been raised several times. DOE previously indicated that the risks were manageable, and that the proposed agenda for hazard reduction was adequate; thus, no programmatic changes were deemed necessary. The Board and DOE do not agree on the urgency of this activity.
October 31, 2000	Integrated Safety Management System Phase II Verification at the Y-12 Plant, August 14–28, 2000	DOE briefing on (1) the content and acceptability of the proposed corrective action plan, (2) the approach to ensure timely and effective execution of the plan by the contractor, and (3) efforts to address staffing inadequacies in the Y-12 Area Office.	Not specified	This issue involves addressing specific technical issues, as well as both the process and program aspects of Integrated Safety Management (ISM).
September 2000	Disassembly Activity	Report on the plan and schedule for addressing related issues.	Prior to activity	Readiness preparation issues associated with dismantlement are common to Enriched Uranium Operations restart.
August 30, 2000	Readiness to Resume Reduction Process for Enriched Uranium Operations	Briefing on resolution of the issues summarized in the staff issue report.	Prior to DOE Operational Readiness Review	The Board requests that the briefing be timed so as not to interfere with the critical path for this resumption activity.
August 18, 2000	Review of Fire Protection Program, Y-12 Plant	The Board asks to be kept abreast of the contractor's and DOE's corrective actions regarding the issues identified in the March 2000 assessment report, as well as in the enclosed staff report.	Not specified	This is one of the specific technical issues to be addressed in discussions of ISM corrective actions.
November 9, 1999	Review of Hydrogen Fluoride Supply System Project and Conceptual Design of Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility, Y-12 Plant	Report outlining the corrective actions to be taken to remedy identified root causes and safety problems with technical project management, quality assurance, etc., as well as changes to ISM practices at the Y-12 Nuclear Security Complex.	April 2000	On April 3, 2000, DOE submitted separate corrective action plans for itself and the contractor. Implementation was started and initially showed some signs of developing rational solutions to the problem. By July 2000, it became clear that major elements of both the DOE and contractor plans were either being suspended or were being ineffectually executed and managed.