



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

July 26, 2001

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:

This letter is an interim response to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) letter of June 28, 2001. Your letter noted continuing concerns with line management's failure to ensure that the new dismantlement campaign at the Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12 was ready to operate, prior to conducting the readiness evaluations). The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) concurs with the issues identified by the Board staff and had, prior to receiving your letter, raised fundamental concerns with the readiness process currently in place at Y-12, including NNSA line management oversight functions.

The Y-12 Area Office (YAO) has identified, as a contributor to this continuing shortcoming, the failure of the contractor's line management to understand, and take ownership of, the readiness preparation and confirmation phases of startup activities through many BWXT Y-12 operations organizations. YAO has directed BWXT Y-12 to correct this fundamental issue, taking lessons from recent successful restarts at the Enriched Uranium Operations facilities. These corrective actions in the readiness process will be implemented before any future independent NNSA reviews will be conducted.

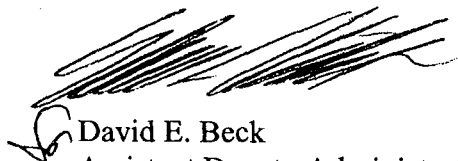
For the Y-12 dismantlement campaign operations, the path forward will include BWXT Y-12 line management establishment of operational proficiency utilizing weapon mockup components, line management completion of an evaluation of overall readiness of the operation, a BWXT Y-12 Readiness Assessment (RA) with a concurrent YAO validation of BWXT Y-12 and YAO readiness, and an independent NNSA RA. The schedule for the readiness review phase is still under review and will be provided to your staff as soon as the schedule has been finalized. A briefing will be provided to you prior to commencement of the NNSA RA.

YAO has and will remain engaged with BWXT Y-12 to strengthen and improve the readiness preparation process utilized throughout the Y-12 Defense Programs facilities. YAO will validate the BWXT Y-12 and YAO processes to ensure the necessary level of facility readiness prior to initiating readiness reviews. The overall long-term corrective actions are being finalized, and NNSA will be prepared to brief these long-term corrective actions during the week of August 20, 2001.



If you have any questions concerning our approach for improving the readiness process at Y-12, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Phil Aiken at 301-903-4513.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David E. Beck", is written over a large, dark, scribbled-out area.

David E. Beck
Assistant Deputy Administrator
for Military Application and
Stockpile Operations
Defense Programs

cc:
M. Whitaker, S-3.1