



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

December 2, 2002

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department continues to make progress in institutionalizing the periodic safety system assessments and system engineering programs established in accordance with our 2000-2 implementation plan. As Responsible Manager for the Department's 2000-2 implementation plan, I am writing you to confirm our implementation path forward as we discussed during our October 16, 2002 briefing to the Board. This path forward has the concurrence of the Department's 2000-2 Executive Team, which has the authority to commit Departmental resources to complete the described actions. Our path toward closure of this recommendation is as follows:

- 1) The Department will provide the Board staff plans for corrective actions to resolve significant Phase II assessment findings once the plans are complete, usually within about 3 months of approval of the assessments. The Department continues to provide the Board staff notice of plans for Phase II assessments and subsequent reports as they are completed.
- 2) The Department has institutionalized requirements for periodic safety system assessments into DOE directives. Both principal program offices, EM and NNSA, will provide the Board by March 2003 a summary letter describing field office plans and schedules to institutionalize safety system assessments into site procedures and practices. At our October 2002 briefing, the program offices indicated their target was to complete site-level institutionalization by October 2003.
- 3) Requirements and guidance to institutionalize Departmental oversight of safety system assessments are being incorporated into the Safety Management Functions, Responsibilities, and Authorities Manual (FRAM) and flow-down documents for EM and NNSA. The Department will provide a summary letter on this topic with copies of these documents once they are approved. As we discussed during the briefing, the Department has concluded that use of the FRAM is a more effective approach than an annual report for institutionalizing the necessary oversight.



- 4) The Federal Technical Capability Panel (FTCP) will provide the Board in January 2003 an updated listing of the Department personnel who are filling positions as subject matter experts at the Department's field and area offices. This update of the Commitment 17 deliverable will identify safety systems assigned to them for oversight.
- 5) The FTCP has provided the Board staff with proposed wording to be included in qualification standards and a schedule for revising the standards. The FTCP maintains this schedule current on its web site located at <http://www.ftcp.org/>. The Department continues to make draft safety directives and standards available to the Board for review and comment prior to issuance.
- 6) The Department continues to finalize a revision of the Nuclear Air Cleaning Handbook. Commitment 24 in the Department's implementation plan called for completion of this revision in November 2002. Due to the large number of technical comments received on the draft handbook and our overall objective of a high quality technical product, this date is no longer achievable. NNSA currently projects issuance of the handbook in June 2003. The Department appreciates the technical comments that the Board staff has provided during development of this revision.

If you have questions in this regard, please contact me at (301) 903-0124.

Sincerely,



Edward B. Blackwood
Director, Office of Environment, Safety and
Health Inspections

cc: Mr. Mark Whitaker