



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

March 25, 2004

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

Dear Mr. Chairman

This letter is the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) response to your letter dated January 22, 2004, which requested to be informed of the actions NNSA will take to address identified shortcomings and enhance the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study (NESS) process. The shortcomings and enhancement recommendations presented to the Board were the result of Mr. Gene Ives' assessment and the Senior Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) recommendations.

Mr. Ives performed a tremendous service by reviewing our NESS processes (Enclosure 1 and 2 contain the Ives cover letter and report). NNSA is implementing most of Mr. Ives' recommendations as we re-write applicable directives. NNSA believes the impending revision of DOE STD 3015, DOE O 452.1X, DOE O 452.2X, D&P Manual Chapters 11.7 and 11.8, and the STAP charter will satisfy the recommendations. Additionally, NNSA has committed to aligning the site functions, responsibilities, and authorities (FRA) documents with the approved NNSA FRA in this same timeframe.

NNSA does not concur with Mr. Ives' recommendation that NESS Group (NESSG) deliberations take place in closed session. Fair, open, and honest discussions are the basis for decisions free from undue influence. However, should the NESSG Chair feel proceedings are being disturbed or otherwise affected by outside influence, the Chair can call for an Executive Session at any time.

Some additional enhancements will be necessary to strengthen the NESS process. The Ives report highlighted schedule slippages by the project teams, affecting the NESS schedules. NNSA will continue to provide oversight on the project team performance during Standing Management Team meetings and by participation in the Pantex Focus Group Meetings. Additionally, the Pantex Site Office will lead an effort to issue a Technical Business Practice to further define the interactions of the laboratories and Pantex contractor on weapons response issues.

Enclosure 3 is our final response to the STAP recommendations. The current NNSA STAP Charter is at Enclosure 4. The revised STAP Charter is at Enclosure 5.



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NNSA anticipates publishing DOE Order 452 1C by June 30, 2004 DOE Order 452 2C should be in the review process by May 31, 2004, with publication by August 31, 2004 Furthermore, NA-121 is currently finalizing DOE-STD-3015 and is reconciling comments received from the field A copy of the final standard will be sent to you once we have finished it NA-121 expects -3015 to be issued no later than May 31, 2004 Chapter 11 7 of the Development and Production Manual, *Nuclear Explosive Operations Change Control Process*, is on the same schedule

Sincerely,



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

Encl 1. Ives cover letter
2 Ives report
3 Final response to STAP recommendations
4 Current STAP Charter
5 Proposed STAP Charter

Cc E Beckner, NA-10
M Whitaker, DR