



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

APR 08 2005

The Honorable A. J. Eggenberger
Acting Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Acting Chairman:

Your February 4, 2005, letter provided your staff's clear observations on the engineering issues experienced by the K-Basin Project at the Richland Operations Office. As stated in that letter, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board believes the continuing design changes the project is undergoing are indicative of a lack of fundamental understanding of the properties and characteristics of the sludge.

Although the site has taken a series of actions to address these concerns, as you were briefed last week at the site, I am not convinced we adequately understand the properties and nature of the sludge well enough to have developed an engineered solution to remove and process the sludge in a predictable manner. Therefore, I am directing the Manager, Richland Operations Office to take the following actions:

- Convene a review board in the next 30 days to assess sludge characterization data to determine whether or not we have an adequate technical basis to proceed (Your staff will be invited to this meeting),
- Continue sludge containerization until there is a condition which stops the operation at which time we would not recommence operations until the review board has completed their assessment, and
- Accelerate the removal of racks and larger debris from the basins so that the sludge removal operations will be able to proceed more predictably in the future.

If you have any further questions, please contact me on (202) 586-7709 or Ms. Patrice M. Bubar, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Integrated Safety Management and Operations Oversight at (202) 586-5151.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Golan
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management

cc: Mark Whitaker, DR-1
Keith Klein, RL

