



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585
September 30, 2008

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable A.J. Eggenberger
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2941

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board's (Board) Recommendation 98-2 identified six actions the Board considered appropriate to improve the safety of nuclear explosive operations at the Pantex Plant. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) addressed those actions through a series of commitments established by an Implementation Plan for Recommendation 98-2 (*U. S. Department of Energy Revised Implementation Plan for Accelerating Safety Management Improvements at the Pantex Plant*, Change 1, October 1, 2002). Completion of that work has resulted in substantial safety improvements for nuclear explosive operations at the Pantex Plant. NNSA recognizes the significant positive impact these improvements have had on the safety of operations and will continue to pursue further safety enhancements.

NNSA has reported on completion of each Implementation Plan commitment through a series of correspondence over the past several years. With the completion of the final open commitment, Commitment 4.5.1, NNSA now considers all the commitments in the Implementation Plan to have been met.

Commitment 4.5.1 stated the Department would complete a comprehensive assessment of the actions taken in response to Recommendation 98-2. In its May 10, 2007, letter, the Board informed NNSA that the Board's expectations for completion of Commitment 4.5.1 had not been met. Specifically, the Board requested a report regarding three items:

1. Clarification of NNSA's expectations for the implementation of expert elicitation, expert judgment, and peer review processes by the design agencies in accordance with the revised DOE-NA-STD-3016-2006 (the Standard).
2. NNSA's plans and criteria for review and approval of the design agency's processes for expert elicitation, expert judgment, and peer review by NNSA's field elements and NNSA Headquarters.
3. NNSA's schedule for implementation of the revised Standard.



In a briefing conducted on February 20, 2008, the Deputy Manager of the Pantex Site Office reported on the information requested by the Board. NNSA explained that expectations for the implementation of expert elicitation, expert judgment, and peer review processes by the design agencies as well as NNSA plans and criteria for reviewing design agency's implementation procedures had been clarified through a workshop conducted in July 2007 and through the development of criteria for evaluating the adequacy of design agency's processes. Initial expert elicitation, expert judgment, and peer review processes developed by the design agencies in accordance with the revised Standard were completed by September 30, 2007. A plan to review the design agency's processes and procedures for implementation of the Standard was approved by the NNSA and provided to the Board on November 23, 2007. The NNSA conducted its assessment in December 2007, and a report of those results was transmitted to the Board on February 4, 2008.

In its report, the review team identified several deficiencies requiring corrective action on the part of the design agencies. NNSA transmitted the report to the respective design agencies for action and those procedures have been revised. NNSA will continue to work with the design agencies to ensure the procedures and their field implementation meet the provisions of the Standard. NNSA will also provide oversight for the long-term implementation of the Standard which requires effective institutionalization of design agency procedures.

The aforementioned actions satisfy commitment 4.5.1 for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the remaining issues associated with Recommendation 98-2. NNSA now considers all of the commitments made to the Board under the 98-2 Implementation Plan to have been met.

Sincerely,



Thomas P. D'Agostino
Administrator

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