

January 31, 2002

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Abraham:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has reviewed your letter of November 13, 2001, proposing closure of the Board's Recommendation 98-1, *Resolution of Issues Identified by DOE Internal Oversight*. The Board agrees that the Department of Energy (DOE) has taken many constructive steps to establish a disciplined process for responding to the findings of its Independent Oversight Office. The most notable of these steps are the issuance of a strong policy statement; the modification of controlling directives and rules, including specification of a mechanism for resolving disputes between the line and independent oversight; and the development of a Corrective Action Tracking System (CATS) for monitoring progress toward correction of safety issues.

In spite of these accomplishments, however, there is still one area in which the Board requires progress before we will consider that DOE has met the full intent of the recommendation. The Implementation Plan required a verification review to confirm that the issue resolution process developed in response to Recommendation 98-1 was fully implemented. The verification team's May 30, 2000, report states that before the process can be considered fully implemented the ". . . documentation of roles, responsibilities, authorities and procedures covering the program, particularly at the PSO [Program Secretarial Office] and field levels, needs to be completed and strengthened in order to ensure that the program will continue to operate as intended . . ."

While the field-level Functions, Responsibilities, and Authorities (FRA) documents have been updated, the FRA's for most of the DOE-Headquarters (PSO) elements either are out of date or remain unfinished. In particular, the FRA's for the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Office of Independent Oversight and Performance, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Environment, Health and Safety do not address the process developed under Recommendation 98-1.

The Board is aware of the significant organizational changes that have occurred in the last 18 months. The occurrence of these changes only serves to reenforce the need to develop and maintain accurate FRA documents as required by the Integrated Safety Management guiding principle, Clear Roles and Responsibilities, which states “Clear and unambiguous lines of authority and responsibility for ensuring safety shall be established and maintained at all organized levels within the Department and its contractors.”

Once the above actions have been satisfactorily completed, the Board is prepared to close Recommendation 98-1.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: The Honorable Robert Gordon Card
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.