

March 29, 2002

The Honorable Jessie Hill Roberson  
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0113

Dear Ms. Roberson:

In September 1999, the Board wrote to the Deputy Secretary of Energy encouraging the Department of Energy (DOE) to take advantage of the technical expertise available through existing contractual arrangements with the Center for Chemical Process Safety (CCPS) and the Institute for Nuclear Power Operations (INPO). DOE replied in February 2000, citing a number of initiatives underway to promote the sharing of the expertise of industry groups.

The Board notes that DOE's contractor at the Savannah River Site recently sought and received support from INPO in assessing the effectiveness of its High-Level Waste Engineering organization. INPO's assessment acknowledged several of the organization's strengths, including specialized technical knowledge and expertise, the recent reduction in operational events, successful implementation of several one-of-a-kind large-scale initiatives, and a strong commitment to supporting facility operations. INPO's assessment also provided recommendations for improvement in several areas, including equipment reliability, consistency and quality of engineering products, training, engineering work management, operational decision making, and continuous performance improvements.

The Board is pleased to note this use of outside expertise, and encourages broader utilization of the skills and knowledge available to DOE through other technical organizations such as INPO and CCPS.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.