

Thomas A. Summers, Acting Chairman  
Patricia L. Lee

**DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES  
SAFETY BOARD**

Washington, DC 20004-2901



May 28, 2025

The Honorable Christopher Wright  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Wright:

In May 2012, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) issued Recommendation 2012-1, *Savannah River Site Building 235-F Safety*. The Recommendation identified the need for the Department of Energy (DOE) to address hazards associated with residual radioactive material contamination in Building 235-F at the Savannah River Site following the completion of associated DOE missions. The Board concluded these hazards constituted an issue of adequate protection based on the consequences postulated from a seismically-induced fire accident and the facility's overall fire susceptibility. Decisive action was needed to ensure the safety of site workers and the public.

Since the issuance of Recommendation 2012-1, DOE has taken substantive action both to reduce the amount of residual radioactive material contamination and the risk of fire in the facility. Although residual contamination was not as readily removable as anticipated, DOE reported achieving a reduction of approximately 40 percent. Additionally, DOE completed electrical and mechanical isolation of the facility, removed combustible materials and ignition sources, and applied a non-combustible fixative material to limit the spread of contamination. These actions resulted in the completion of DOE's implementation plan for the Recommendation in 2020 and subsequent deactivation of the facility in 2023.

Currently, as the facility awaits decommissioning, the site contractor performs periodic inspections to evaluate building structure, process enclosure integrity, and ventilation system performance. These inspections, coupled with periodic radiological surveys, are necessary to ensure DOE will be able to detect any infrastructure degradation that could allow radiological contamination to spread before decommissioning occurs.

Considering the significant reduction in the original fire hazard, the associated reduction in potential consequences to site workers and the public, and current scheduled plans for decommissioning, the Board concludes that DOE has successfully addressed Recommendation 2012-1. Therefore, pursuant to 42 United States Code §2286b(d), the Board hereby closes Recommendation 2012-1.

While the hazards remaining do not constitute an issue of adequate protection, residual contamination in Building 235-F still poses a notable hazard to site workers. Any spread of contamination, considering the highly dispersible nature of the remaining material, would complicate decommissioning activities and pose additional hazards to the workers performing these activities. Until decommissioning is complete, continuing the current inspection routines will provide assurance that DOE can promptly identify and address any emergent deficiencies. Furthermore, decommissioning to effectively eliminate the hazards posed by the facility should remain a high priority for DOE.

Given the importance of continuing current inspections, and to streamline further reporting on this important matter, pursuant to 42 United States Code §2286b(d), the Board requests three additional annual reports in FY25, FY26, and FY27 providing 1) the results of radiological surveys and facility inspections and 2) progress toward decommissioning. These reports should be submitted by August 12 of each year and include a discussion of any abnormal facility conditions identified, actions taken to mitigate these conditions, and an assessment of any risk to completing the decommissioning project according to the current project baseline. Associated annual briefings are no longer required. This request amends and supersedes previous reporting requirements related to Building 235-F.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas A. Summers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas A. Summers  
Acting Chairman

c: Mr. Joe Olencz, Director, Office of the Departmental Representative to the Board