



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585



February 15, 2008

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DNFSB SAFETY BOARD

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am responding to your letter to me dated February 6, 2008. The Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility (HEUMF) is a cornerstone of the modernization effort at the Y-12 National Security Complex. I appreciate the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board's (DNFSB) active participation in overseeing the nuclear safety issues associated with the design and construction of this important facility, including the DNFSB's interest in the fire-suppression water supply for HEUMF as discussed in your letter. We have and will continue to work closely with DNFSB to realize our shared objective of resolving safety issues as early as possible.

Since HEUMF obtained approval as a project in 1998, the National Nuclear Security Administration has had frequent and close interaction with the Board and your staff. In particular, the safety approach to the fire protection system and the boundaries for the HEUMF for the sprinkler system were identified in 2003, and a technical basis for this system was documented in the Preliminary Documented Safety Analysis and the Y-12 Site Office (YSO) Safety Evaluation Report in 2004. This technical information was covered in detail with members of your staff as a part of our continuing effort to work closely with your staff on matters important to nuclear safety at the Y-12 National Security Complex.

In June 2007, YSO raised questions regarding the safety classification of the fire suppression system and its water supply with DNFSB staff members as part of an Integrated Project Review conducted on the Potable Water Supply System. This dialogue resulted in the development of several actions to ensure the operational reliability of the water supply system supporting the HEUMF Fire Suppression System, and specific direction on these actions was provided to the Management and Operating Contractor from the YSO Manager. In addition to adding pressure monitoring capability, milestones for the directed actions include an update to the Uranium Processing Facility project regarding water tanks, due to occur in May, and a HEUMF safety basis update, due to occur in July 2008. The status of these actions, timeline, and overall HEUMF project execution were provided to most of DNFSB during a visit on January 30, 2008. I am satisfied that the planned technical evaluations will provide a solid basis for determining if further actions are required to the fire-suppression water supply system.



As requested in your letter, I plan to provide you with a briefing and report in May 2008. At that time, we will update you on the progress of the actions we are taking to verify adequate operational reliability of the water supply system for the HEUMF sprinkler system.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Thompson at (202) 586-6058.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Smolen', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert L. Smolen
Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs

cc: M. Whitaker, HS-1.1
W. Ostendorff, NA-2