

Peter S. Winokur, Chairman
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**DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES
SAFETY BOARD**

Washington, DC 20004-2901



October 1, 2010

Dr. John R. Snyder
213 Gettysburg Lane
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83404

Dear Dr. Snyder:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) received your correspondence dated August 16, 2010, regarding the safe, secure storage of uranium-233 at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Board's closure of Recommendation 97-1, *Safe Storage of Uranium-233*. As you noted, the Board stated that safe completion of the Uranium-233 Downblending and Disposition Project at Oak Ridge National Laboratory can be viewed as an extension of the Recommendation's implementation.

In response to the Recommendation, the Department of Energy (DOE) inspected the containers of uranium-233. This inspection demonstrated that the current storage conditions and the containers were providing safe, secure storage of the material. Accordingly, the Board has no immediate concerns regarding the safety of uranium-233 materials stored in Building 3019 at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Facility operations are currently limited to surveillance and maintenance activities. The nuclear materials are protected by a suite of passive, engineered controls. However, the Board does not consider long-term storage of this material in the aging Building 3019 a desired condition. The Board will continue to monitor this project, and if the project is delayed significantly, the Board will reassess the safety of continued storage of uranium-233 in this building.

The Board oversees the safety of design efforts for the Downblending and Disposition Project, which will provide the ultimate disposition path for the material. The Board believes the project can provide a safe means of removing the uranium-233 inventory from Building 3019 if implemented as planned. However, DOE plans are subject to uncertainties relative to both funding and schedule. If DOE changes its plans for final disposition of these materials, the Board would review the safety aspects of the new activity.

Regarding your suggestion that DOE ship the uranium-233 material to another DOE site, the Board notes that shipment would require a container approved by the Department of Transportation. Design, certification, manufacturing and repackaging into such a container is generally non-trivial.

Thank you for your interest in nuclear safety. Please feel free to submit additional information or requests at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter S. Winokur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "W".

Peter S. Winokur, Ph.D.
Chairman

c: The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
The Honorable Inés R. Triay
Mr. Gerald G. Boyd