

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

Washington, DC 20004-2901



March 12, 2014

The Honorable Ernest J. Moniz  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Moniz:

Following the unanticipated release of radioactive material at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, the Department of Energy (DOE) has relied on the filtered ventilation system to confine the radioactive material within the mine. This system is not a credited safety system and has not been operated, maintained, and protected consistent with its current function to prevent further release of radioactive material from the mine. Given the uncertainty of the cause of the radioactive release, the potential for additional releases cannot be ruled out.

The Board advises DOE to thoroughly evaluate the safety controls and contingency plans necessary to maintain confinement to ensure adequate protection of the workers and public. The Board will continue to evaluate the fire and contamination events and will provide further advice in future communications.

Sincerely,

Peter S. Winokur, Ph.D.  
Chairman

Enclosure

c: Mrs. Mari-Jo Campagnone