

November 5, 2003

The Honorable Linton Brooks
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear Ambassador Brooks:

On August 19, 2003, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) expressed concern about safety at two Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) facilities. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requested to be informed within 30 days as to the plans of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) for establishing and maintaining defensible lightning protection at the Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF) and addressing safety system functional classification issues at the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research facility. NNSA responded October 10, 2003, almost a month after the required delivery date acknowledging and concurring with the Board's concerns, but requesting an additional 30 days to appropriately respond.

A request for an extension should have been delivered in time to act on it before the initial due date. In addition, the due date, after extending the reporting requirement an additional 30 days, has now passed.

It is imperative that NNSA respond promptly to safety-related issues. The Board's initial letter was prompted, in part, because WETF continues to operate months after a study, forwarded to NNSA by LANL, identified that the lightning protection system could not perform its credited safety function.

The Board does not agree to any extension of the original commitment date and requests that the report be completed and delivered as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Ralph E. Erickson
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.