

June 12, 2003

The Honorable Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0113

Dear Ms. Roberson:

One goal of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Quality Assurance Improvement Plan (QAIP) was to correct observed weaknesses in quality assurance programs that affect the operation of items serving vital safety functions at DOE's defense nuclear facilities. This goal was focused primarily on implementation weaknesses rather than weaknesses in program requirements or guidance. As part of this goal, DOE's Office of Environmental Management (EM) committed (QAIP Commitment 1.1.2) to reviewing the Phase I and Phase II assessments conducted under the Implementation Plan for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board's (Board) Recommendation 2000-2, *Configuration Management, Vital Safety Systems* to identify any corrective actions required to address quality assurance issues. Specifically, QAIP Commitment 1.1.2 required that an EM team review the Phase I and II assessments under Recommendation 2000-2 and develop recommendations and corrective action plans, as required. The enclosure to your letter dated May 13, 2003, stated that no further corrective action plans were required for these assessments, beyond the general recommendations of the EM Review Team.

The Board agrees with the EM Review Team's general recommendations. However, your letter did not include any details regarding EM's plans and schedule for implementing those general recommendations. The Board looks forward to hearing about these details at your earliest convenience.

In addition, as part of the QAIP goal discussed above, EM committed (QAIP Commitment 1.2.2) to integrating the Phase II assessments of vital safety systems with EM's oversight programs and to providing a schedule for these oversight reviews of vital safety systems. The Board is pleased to hear that this commitment has been completed and requests that the schedule developed for conducting these reviews be provided as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.