

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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May 5, 2010

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Chu:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has received the Deputy Secretary's March 16, 2010, memorandum entitled, "DOE 2010 Safety and Security Reform Plan." The plan and its attached end-state vision contemplate dramatic reductions in the number of Department of Energy (DOE) directives, and the streamlining of other directives. The Board is required by the Atomic Energy Act to review and evaluate the content and implementation of DOE's directives and regulations relating to the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of defense nuclear facilities. These directives, often referred to as "Orders of Interest to the Board," include explicit nuclear safety directives, as well as directives that impact operations at defense nuclear facilities, such as fire safety, emergency management, and quality assurance. DOE directives, in conjunction with DOE safety rules, provide the bedrock upon which adequate protection of the public, the environment, and workers is built, and directives provide the assurance that DOE contractors will safely conduct operations at defense nuclear facilities. Any effort to overhaul the directives system should be undertaken with the objective of strengthening and improving the system while continuing to ensure adequate levels of protection and prevent accidents or incidents at defense nuclear facilities.

The Board needs additional information to understand how the planned reduction of directives during the next 8 months will impact the safety of defense nuclear facilities. Therefore, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requests a report and a briefing within 15 days of receipt of this letter providing clarification of the specific criteria DOE is using to analyze individual directives to determine cancellation and consolidation and the steps that DOE is taking to improve and strengthen directives. The Board further requests monthly briefings on the progress of the "DOE 2010 Safety and Security Reform Plan" and directives being considered for revision or cancellation, as well as the documented bases for such revisions or cancellations.

Sincerely,

Peter S. Winokur, Ph.D.
Chairman

c: Mr. Andrew Wallo III