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The Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

September 29, 2000

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DNF SAFETY BOARD

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Department's implementation plan for stabilizing the nuclear materials identified in your Recommendation 2000-1. I am pleased to see that you consider our current plan for stabilizing materials at the Hanford Site, the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory as an acceptable path forward.

We understand that you continue to have reservations about the current schedule for stabilization actions at the Savannah River Site. Based on existing safety analyses and compensatory measures, legacy materials, including plutonium and oxides, will continue to be safely stored while Building 235-F is being modified and until final stabilization. Moreover, further documentation is being prepared to describe the technical bases and any necessary upgrades to provide additional margins of safety. We have a request for realignment of Savannah River Site funding before Congress which, if approved, will enable the Department to meet the current schedule. This schedule, as described in the implementation plan, represents our best case achievable path to stabilize the Savannah River Site legacy items.

With respect to your points about the maintenance and efficient use of facilities for stabilization activities, our staffs are scheduled to meet soon concerning current Savannah River Site canyon plans. At that time, we will discuss the full range of materials that may require canyon processing.



As noted in my June 8, 2000, letter to you, we expect to provide you an updated implementation plan for remaining legacy materials at Los Alamos by October 31, 2000. This plan will be based on an integrated safety assessment approach and will encompass both legacy and newly generated materials.

With regard to the adequacy of funding that is being allocated for nuclear safety initiatives, I assure you that we continue to brief Congress on our funding requirements. As appropriate, we also will continue to request funding realignments, as in the case of the Savannah River Site.

I appreciate the Board's continued assistance and valuable advice concerning safety issues affecting the Department. In particular, I appreciate your views on specific components of the Savannah River Site plan and on improving the Los Alamos plan. Our staffs will continue working together to understand and address your concerns.

If you have any further questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. David G. Huizenga, Office of Integration and Disposition, at (202) 586-5151.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Richardson", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Richardson