



98-0003935

Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

December 28, 1998

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In the Revised Implementation Plan (IP) for Board Recommendation 93-3, Improving DOE Technical Capability in Defense Nuclear Facilities Programs, the Department commits to line management ownership and enhancing executive commitment as essential elements for the successful implementation of a corporate program to recruit, develop, deploy, and retain technical capability at defense nuclear facilities.

As a deliverable pursuant to Commitment 5.2.2 of the IP, the Federal Technical Capability Panel reviewed the existing Technical Excellence Policy, and updated it to ensure that the Federal Technical Capability Program principles were incorporated into the revised Policy. The revised Policy was renamed the Federal Technical Capability Policy and was incorporated into the Department's Directives Management System. The Secretary approved and signed the enclosed Policy on December 10, 1998. The Policy was subsequently posted on the Department's Directives Home Page on December 24, 1998.

The Department has completed the actions identified under Commitment 5.2.2 and proposes closure of this commitment.

If you have any questions please call me, or your staff may contact Mr. Dave Roth at (202) 426-1506.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Evans
Executive Secretary to the
Federal Technical Capability Panel

Enclosure

cc:

Steve Richardson, Panel Chair
Panel Members
Mark B. Whitaker, Jr., S-3.1

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POLICY

DOE P 420.1

12-10-98

**SUBJECT: FEDERAL TECHNICAL CAPABILITY POLICY FOR
DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES**

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Federal Technical Capability Program provides for the recruitment, deployment, development, and retention of Federal personnel with the demonstrated technical capability to safely accomplish the Department's missions and responsibilities. The Federal Technical Capability Program is institutionalized through Department of Energy (DOE) directives to establish the program's objective, guiding principles, and functions.

The program is specifically applicable to those offices and organizations performing functions related to the safe operation of defense nuclear facilities. It is applied to all aspects of recruitment, deployment, development, and retention of Federal employees in these organizations. The objective of this policy is achieved by other means for Naval Reactors (Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program).

Other organizations within the Department may also apply elements of the program on an optional basis. There are a number of DOE offices and organizations that must ensure their Federal employees are appropriately trained and technically capable when carrying out their responsibilities. While these offices and organizations fall outside the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board jurisdiction, DOE is committed to ensuring that responsible employees are trained and technically capable when performing their duties.

POLICY

The Department of Energy is committed to developing and maintaining a technically competent workforce to accomplish its missions in a safe and efficient manner through the Federal Technical Capability Program. It is Department policy that the program and functions described herein shall be used to recruit, deploy, develop and retain a workforce that can ensure this occurs. The Department will strive to recruit and hire technically capable personnel, continuously develop the technical expertise of its existing workforce and, within the limitations of executive policy and Federal law, retain critical technical capabilities within the Department at all times. Although specifically relating to the safe operation of defense nuclear facilities, the principles and intent of

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the Federal Technical Capability Program may be applied to organizations that fall outside the purview of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. The Department is determined to continue making improvements in the capabilities of the Federal workforce and to fully utilize all of the tools at its disposal.

The principles of the Federal Technical Capability Program are the following:

As stated in the Department's Integrated Safety Management Guiding Principles: Federal personnel possess the experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary to discharge their safety responsibilities;

Line managers are accountable and have the responsibility, authority, and flexibility to achieve and maintain technical excellence;

Supporting organizations (personnel, training, contracts, finance, etc.) recognize line managers as customers and effectively support them in achieving and maintaining technical capabilities; and,

An integrated corporate approach is required to assure that necessary technical capabilities and resources are available to meet the overall needs of the Department's defense nuclear facility missions.

The Federal Technical Capability Program consists of the four elements described below. These elements are interrelated and use of only one or two of the elements will not ensure that an organization achieves its technical capability goals. For the Federal Technical Capability Program to succeed, *all* elements must be effectively implemented.

Executive Commitment and Line Management Ownership: This function includes establishing policies and procedures, accountability, program direction, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

- The Department will establish a Federal Technical Capability Panel consisting of Senior Technical Safety Managers to oversee the implementation of the Federal Technical Capability Program.
- The effectiveness of the Federal Technical Capability Program will be periodically assessed using both internal and external experts.
- The Federal Technical Capability Program will be institutionalized through directives, standards, procedures, and guidance documents.

Recruiting and Deploying Technically Capable Personnel: This function includes career path planning, succession planning, defining position responsibilities, and filling technical positions with high-quality technical personnel.

- The Department will pursue renewal of Defense Act Excepted Service Authority as necessary to attract highly competent technical personnel.
- A Federal Technical Staffing Plan will be developed and maintained by each defense nuclear facility field and program element. This staffing plan will form the basis for the recruitment, development, and deployment of personnel.

Developing and Documenting Technically Capable Personnel: This function includes baselining existing technical capabilities as well as individual development planning and improvement.

- Technical Qualification Programs will form the basis for the development and assignment of personnel responsible for ensuring the safe operation of defense nuclear facilities.
- Fellowship programs and other continuing education processes will be utilized to enhance the continuous improvement of technical personnel.
- Personnel involvement with professional organizations, authoring of professional papers and pursuit of professional certifications will be encouraged.

Retaining Critical Technical Skills: This function includes career path planning, succession planning, performance reviews, promotions, and rewards.

- The Department will identify the critical technical positions which are essential for ensuring the safe operation of defense nuclear facilities, and establish programs and processes to ensure that those critical technical capabilities are maintained.
- Promotions, rewards, fellowships, industry exchange programs, rotational assignments and other related programs will be used to enhance the retention of personnel who continue to exhibit sustained superior performance in critical technical positions.



BILL RICHARDSON
Secretary of Energy