



98-0003358

The Under Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

October 22, 1998

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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:

This is in response to your July 22, 1998, letter acknowledging receipt of the Department of Energy's (DOE) System Requirements Document (SRD) deliverable and providing your comments on other issues relating to Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Recommendation 97-1, *Safe Storage of Uranium-233*.

I am aware that there are considerable unresolved policy, programmatic and technical issues involving Recommendation 97-1, and I understand your desire to keep the SRD commitment open pending further progress on the overall systems engineering effort. The many complexities associated with disposition of the Department's excess nuclear materials require a comprehensive long-term strategy for Uranium-233 that integrates a wide range of DOE activities/systems and stakeholder considerations. The 97-1 Technical Team is coordinating their activities with other departmental efforts and has identified the key planning assumptions, decisions to be made based on these assumptions, and a timetable to resolve these policy, programmatic and technical issues to enable timely execution of the program. This information, and other open SRD issues (e.g. outcomes from the Uranium-233 Environmental Impact Statement), the decisions needed to resolve these issues, and the dates when these decisions are needed, will be included in the Program Execution Plan (PEP). This Plan will be completed and forwarded to the Board in December 1998.

The 97-1 Technical Team has reviewed the program logic for the Recommendation 97-1 Implementation Plan as part of developing the PEP. Based upon that review, the Technical Team expects to complete a Systems Engineering Management Plan late this fall (which also will be forwarded to the Board) and include a description of the system design in the PEP. The Department will update the system description in the PEP as the Uranium-233 system design evolves with future program activities and decisions. Based upon the inclusion of the description of the system design in the PEP, the Department proposes to not provide a separate System Design Document deliverable.

I am encouraged by the progress the Department has made with the 97-1 Implementation Plan. Also, I am sincerely, appreciative of the contributions made by the Board staff through their interactions with the 97-1 Technical Team.

If you have further questions, please contact me or have a member of your staff contact Mr. James Owendoff, Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, at (202) 586-7710.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernest J. Moniz', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Ernest J. Moniz