

**Department of Energy**

Washington, DC 20585

FEB 22 1995

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

Dear Chairman Conway:

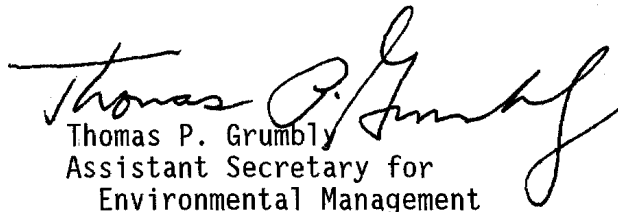
Your May 11 and December 13, 1994, letters address our slow rate of progress in meeting our commitments to characterize Hanford tank wastes under Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) Recommendation 93-5. I share your concerns and have met with Headquarters and Richland program managers to re-emphasize the importance of the tank waste characterization program, which is clearly the "gateway" program for the overall Tank Waste Remediation System.

In our response to Recommendation 93-5, the Department of Energy committed to an aggressive schedule with significant programmatic risk. At that time, the sampling requirements for safe storage and disposal were not well defined. While we have made considerable progress in many aspects of the implementation plan, we continue to have difficulty in reliably obtaining core and auger samples from the tanks, and we do not yet have a technical basis that specifically identifies our sampling needs. Our slow progress is directly attributable to the problems in these areas.

You were briefed on January 19, 1995, regarding actions we are taking to correct the sampling problems and develop a technical basis. We will brief the Board on the status of these efforts and our future plans before the end of March 1995. We will also discuss our technical basis to ensure safe storage of tank wastes.

We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,


Thomas P. Grumbly
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management

