



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
 Washington, DC 20585
 December 21, 2007

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable A. J. Eggenberger
 Chairman
 Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
 625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
 Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your October 16, 2007, letter that provided a 60 day reporting requirement to address your concerns about the safety of nuclear operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Specifically, your letter requested a report on the actions the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has taken to (1) facilitate timely and effective implementation of ongoing safety improvement initiatives for nuclear operations, (2) rapidly increase confidence in safety systems currently relied upon in operating nuclear facilities, and, (3) improve the Federal oversight of safety systems at LANL.

I am requesting an additional 60 days to respond to this request in order to provide a more comprehensive and informative description of the status of safety improvements at LANL, and of actions NNSA is taking throughout the chain of command to improve Federal oversight. During this period, senior staff members from LANL, Los Alamos Site Office (LASO), the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs (NA-10), and the Chief Defense Nuclear Safety (CDNS) will meet and review the status of safety improvements and identify actions that should be prioritized to further facilitate timely implementation of safety improvement initiatives. Based on this review, NNSA will be able to provide the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) with a thorough and detailed description of steps taken to immediately effect safety improvements, as well as the progress of initiatives to address the long-standing systemic issues at LANL.

A series of inspections and reviews of LASO and NA-10 Headquarters have identified a number of issues related to inadequate Federal oversight. This includes CDNS reviews of both NA-10, and LASO, as well as an ongoing Environment, Health and Safety inspection of LANL, LASO, and NNSA Headquarters by the Office of Independent Oversight (HS-64). To effectively respond to the interrelated nature of the oversight findings at LASO and NA-10, resultant corrective action plans must be coordinated and comprehensive. The NNSA intends on using the additional 60 days to develop a



corrective action strategy, that will address oversight functions and responsibilities for LASO and NNSA Headquarters organizations, including an analysis of staffing throughout all the affected NNSA organizations, with a goal of ensuring NNSA's resources are efficiently allocated in proportion to the functions and responsibilities. Although the corrective actions will not be fully implemented, and in effect within 60 days, NNSA will be in a much better position to provide DNFSB with a roadmap of how improvements to oversight of safety systems and nuclear operations will be successfully realized.

As requested in your letter, a briefing on these issues will be arranged in close timing with the new reporting date. If you have any questions, please contact me or Michael Thompson at (202) 586-6058.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. P. D'Agostino". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thomas P. D'Agostino
Administrator

cc: M. Whitaker, HS-1.1