

A.J. Eggenberger, Chairman  
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# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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June 1, 2007

The Honorable James A. Rispoli  
Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0113

Dear Mr. Rispoli:

As required by law, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has been reviewing the design of the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) being planned at the Savannah River Site. This facility has been of particular concern to the Board because of technical shortcomings in the design process; namely, a lack of adequate geotechnical design requirements, and structural engineering issues, including those related to structural modeling. The Board noted these deficiencies to the Department of Energy (DOE) in a letter dated January 10, 2007.

DOE, its contractors, and the Board have been working together closely to resolve these safety issues in a timely manner and so minimize potential impacts on the high-level waste program at the site. The Board notes that (1) appropriate structural engineering design expertise and DOE oversight have been brought to bear on the project, (2) geotechnical requirements are being finalized, and (3) changes to the structural design and the analysis methodology have been made. In a letter dated May 11, 2007, DOE states that a mutually agreeable and technically sound path forward for the SWPF design has been developed, and requests that the Board acknowledge that the work completed to date addresses its concerns sufficiently to proceed with the SWPF final analyses and design.

The Board is satisfied with the recent actions taken by DOE and its contractor to resolve the safety issues identified in the January 10, 2007, letter for the preliminary design of the SWPF. As such, the Board believes DOE's path forward for the SWPF design is acceptable. Significant work remains to finalize the design. The Board will continue to work with DOE to ensure the final design provides adequate safety.

Sincerely,

A. J. Eggenberger  
Chairman

c: Mr. Jeffrey M. Allison  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.