



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

December 22, 1999

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department shares the concerns outlined in your November 2, 1999, letter regarding the condition of materials stored in Building 9206 at the Oak Ridge Y-12 Plant. The Department has approached Building 9206 risk reduction in a thoughtful and deliberate fashion. The Y-12 Site has prepared, and the Department has approved, the Building 9206 Phase Out/Deactivation Program Management Plan. The Plan was completed in February 1999 and was formally forwarded to the Board as an enclosure to a March 31, 1999, letter.

The facility Basis for Interim Operation and the Operational Safety Requirement have been revised to incorporate Department of Energy (DOE) comments and have been resubmitted to DOE for final approval. It reflects the best judgement of risks, in categories, relating to Building 9206. The 9206 Deactivation Plan addresses these risks, in a prioritized fashion, and the plan will be reviewed/revised as necessary. Risk reduction progress has been made in Building 9206, and more will be accomplished in Fiscal Year (FY) 2000. The enclosure details items that have been accomplished, or that are planned to be accomplished, during FY 2000, utilizing available FY 2000 funding.

The Department believes: 1) it is doing a credible job in the mitigation of the risks associated with Building 9206; 2) that it has made progress in reducing Building 9206 risks to date; 3) that additional significant risk reduction progress will be accomplished in FY 2000; and 4) that the funding for risk mitigation for Building 9206 is at the correct level in FY 2000, given the total national security demands on available Defense Programs funding for the Y-12 Site.

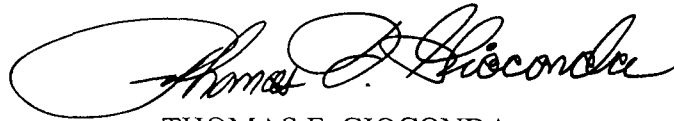
In summary, staying the course outlined in the enclosure to this letter for Building 9206 will increase the prospects for success in resuming the complete agenda of operations, which is our mutual objective, as the Board pointed out in their November 22, 1999, letter.

Detail of Building 9206 risk reduction items that have been accomplished, or that are planned to be accomplished during FY2000, utilizing available FY2000 funding

- Pyrophorics will be moved to a glovebox with an inert gas blanket as soon as prerequisites are completed. This action would have to be completed before the material is processed, and will accelerate this risk reduction effort. SCD: 7/1/00
- Liquid columns are isolated. Any leakage will be handled by facility personnel, using approved standing orders, and available bottle storage capacity. Reserved one six bottle dolly that will cover any one column or pencil tank leak. Covered by Standing Order SO-9206-98-0009.
- Containerized Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) inventory has been reduced. Two percent removed as of July 1999 inventory (working on better data from more recent inventories, actual will be higher). Forty-five percent planned for FY2000 is in addition to this number.
- Wet Depleted Uranium (DU) chips are being removed from the facility and are being sent to the Chip Oxidation facility for disposal. Twenty percent complete. SCD: 4/1/00
- Testing with CZT crystals is complete, and will lead to reduced measurement time and greater confidence in holdup material amounts.
- Roof repairs have been made to reduce the amount of rainwater leaking into the facility. Thirty-five percent of roof patched (~15,000 sq ft of 45,000 sq ft).
- Ventilation repairs continue on an "as needed" basis. Additional fans are in the process of being repaired. This will increase air flows in the facility. AJ-33 being replaced. Will add 18,000 cfm to overall building exhaust.
- Work continues on removing hazardous chemicals from the facility. Flammable chemicals in the combustible storage cabinets are being removed first.

Please contact me if you have any questions or have your staff contact Phil Aiken at 301-903-4513.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas F. Gioconda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "T".

THOMAS F. GIOCONDA
Brigadier General, USAF
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Defense Programs

cc:
M. Whitaker, S-3.1