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# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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May 26, 1999

Mr. James M. Owendoff  
Acting Assistant Secretary for  
Environmental Management  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20585-0113

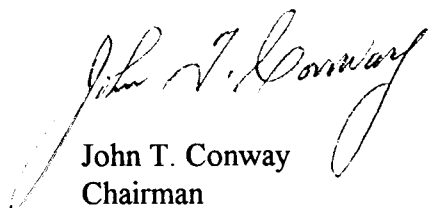
Dear Mr. Owendoff:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has received and is reviewing the *Integrated Project Management Plan for the Plutonium Finishing Plant Stabilization and Deactivation Project (IPMP)*. One topic of particular interest is the stabilization of plutonium solutions at the Hanford Site. We understand that the primary stabilization method for plutonium solutions at the Hanford Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) will be the magnesium hydroxide precipitation process. The Board commends this decision and urges the Department of Energy (DOE) to implement the precipitation process aggressively. The Board is also aware that the prototype vertical denitration calciner, which has been successfully operated in the past and is intended to be used in the future, can offer additional risk reduction by stabilizing some solutions while preparations are made to install the precipitation system at PFP. Furthermore, the prototype calciner can serve as a backup system should problems delay or preclude the operation of the precipitation system.

The Board understands that DOE has identified seismic issues that could delay operation of the prototype calciner. We urge DOE to resolve these issues promptly and initiate operation, thereby beginning to make progress on reducing the risk associated with continued storage of plutonium solutions at PFP. The Board does not consider the seismic issues to be of sufficient severity to warrant delaying this activity.

The Board is currently reviewing the details of the IPMP and will provide additional comments to DOE in the near future. If you have comments or questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.