



## The Secretary of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

October 12, 1999

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department of Energy acknowledges receipt of Recommendation 99-1, issued on August 11, 1999, and published in the Federal Register on August 27, 1999, and accepts the Board's recommendations.

The Department has initiated activities to develop and implement improved pit storage programs and to develop a shipping container for transporting pits to the plutonium disposition facility. We also implemented a pit repackaging program to ensure that pits are stored in accordance with applicable specifications.

In support of nuclear material disposition activities, departmental program offices have been working together to ensure that timely actions are completed to accomplish defined programmatic end states. Actions include a systems analysis study to generate programmatic requirements for a pit shipping container, a review of pit surveillance data to characterize pit integrity in current environments, and increasing the pit repackaging rate to 200 pits per month. The Department will continue these efforts to ensure the adequacy of complex-wide pit management.

The Department accepts the recommendations contained in Recommendation 99-1 and will develop an implementation plan to accomplish the following:

1. Expediently resolve the compatibility issues that have the potential to impact the long-term safe storage of pits. Through a container surveillance program, the Department will monitor the AL-R8 Sealed Insert container to ensure its continued quality and reliability.
2. Ensure that repackaging takes place at an accelerated rate so that pits are expediently placed into containers suited to safe storage. The actions undertaken in the implementation plan will focus on ensuring a safe and timely repackaging program. A process to develop a resource-loaded repackaging schedule will be established with an initial baseline repackaging rate of 200 per month.



3. Develop a system of statistical sampling for the AL-R8 Sealed Insert containers to assess container integrity and to provide horizons for future repackaging and repackaging rate requirements.
4. Assign a single individual the responsibility and accountability, along with the necessary resources and authority for accomplishment of the above.

Mr. David E. Beck, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Application and Stockpile Operations, Defense Programs, (202) 586-4879, is appointed the manager responsible for preparation of the implementation plan in accordance with sub-recommendation 4 of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board letter. He will work with you to develop a plan that meets our mutual expectations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Richardson