

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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August 25, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Chu:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) is planning a series of public hearings on the Department of Energy's (DOE) implementation of Recommendation 2004-1, *Oversight of Complex, High-Hazard Nuclear Operations*, issued May 21, 2004. The DOE Implementation Plan for this recommendation should have been completed by now. Unfortunately, major commitments remain incomplete and others need to be reviewed and reinforced by cognizant managers to reaffirm the continued achievement of their purposes and functions. The Board believes that senior DOE management attention is needed to achieve the purposes of the Recommendation.

The hearings will commence on September 29, 2009, at the Board's headquarters in Washington, DC. At this first hearing, the Board will be especially interested in testimony regarding broad safety goals and safety management approaches endorsed by the senior managers of DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration. Later hearings will be devoted to specific aspects of the implementation plan such as the role of the Central Technical Authority, feedback and improvement mechanisms, and nuclear safety research and development. The lines of inquiry to be explored in this first hearing are provided in an enclosure to this letter.

The Board extends an invitation to you to appear and offer testimony at this hearing, along with other DOE officials responsible for implementation of the Recommendation.

Sincerely,

John E. Mansfield, Ph.D.
Vice Chairman

Enclosure

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.

Enclosure
Topics for September 29, 2009 Public Meeting

1. Expectations of the senior Department of Energy (DOE) leadership with respect to safety philosophy and safety management approach.
2. Assessment of the progress made in implementing Recommendation 2004-1, *Oversight of Complex, High-Hazard Nuclear Operations*.
3. Application of principles of Integrated Safety Management as the foundation for safety management approach.
4. Implementation of contractor assurance models and the appropriate level of DOE/National Nuclear Security Administration oversight for these activities.
5. Maintenance of functions, authorities, and responsibilities for personnel with key safety management roles during organizational change.
6. Actions taken to stimulate continuous safety improvement.