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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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November 9, 1999

The Honorable Bill Richardson
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Richardson:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) recently received the Department of Energy's (DOE) request to close Recommendation 93-3, *Improving Technical Capability in Defense Nuclear Facilities Programs*, which was issued to DOE on June 1, 1993. The Board agrees that DOE has met all of the commitments in the revised Implementation Plan for Recommendation 93-3.

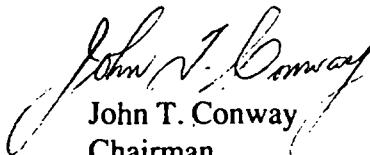
Many changes in DOE's mission and infrastructure have occurred since the Board issued Recommendation 93-3. The Board has and will continue to emphasize the vital importance that a technically-competent workforce plays in ensuring public and worker health and safety. The Board appreciates your personal commitment to the aggressive implementation of the Federal Technical Capability Program. The Board believes that DOE's efforts in response to this recommendation have resulted in excellent programs and processes that will be invaluable in the training and qualification of the next generation of the DOE federal workforce.

A keystone of the Federal Technical Capability Program is the Technical Qualification Program (TQP). Experience has led to improvements in the TQP, but the results of the recent Phase II assessments of the TQP show that additional work is needed to bring uniform excellence across DOE. The Board will monitor the progress of the improvements in the TQP.

Another keystone of the Federal Technical Capability Program is the Technical Leadership Development Program (TLDP). This program, part of the original Recommendation 93-3 Implementation Plan, was designed to recruit the best technical college graduates and then to accelerate their professional development with the aim of building DOE's future workforce. Budget reductions and downsizing led to the suspension of the original TLDP. The Federal Technical Capability Program now includes an improved TLDP and college recruitment has begun. Unless the highest level of emphasis is placed on this program by DOE, however, the Board is concerned that the TLDP could lose resources during FY 2000.

The Board accepts DOE's proposal to close Recommendation 93-3 and strongly encourages the Federal Technical Capability Panel to maintain the commitments in its FY 2000 Action Plan. Given its significance to safety, the Board will continue to monitor DOE's efforts in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.