

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

Peter S. Winokur, Chairman
John E. Mansfield, Vice Chairman
Joseph F. Bader
Larry W. Brown
Jessie H. Roberson

625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700 Washington, D.C. 20004-2901
(202) 694-7000



April 29, 2010

The Honorable Inés R. Triay
Assistant Secretary for Environmental
Management
U. S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0113

Dear Dr. Triay:

The staff of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) recently reviewed the Integrated Facility Aging Management (IFAM) program at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The Board has been mindful for several years of the deterioration resulting from the aging of key SRS facilities. Identification of aging systems, evaluation of necessary aging management measures, and implementation of those corrective measures are the Board's primary concerns.

In 2006, the Department of Energy (DOE) directed an engineering assessment of H-Canyon be performed to ensure that its facilities could operate cost-effectively through 2019. At that time, the Board concluded that the strategy for upgrading the safety basis appeared reasonable, but a systematic life extension evaluation was needed to ensure continued safe operations. In 2007, DOE Headquarters suggested SRS managers develop a robust integrated facility aging management plan for H-Canyon. Accordingly, DOE and its contractor established the IFAM program, which has generated more than 60 recommendations.

The IFAM program has identified repair or replacement needs that are placed on the H-Area Infrastructure Upgrades List. Funding to address the needs on this list has fallen short of 2007 planning assumptions. The contractor has used operating funds to complete many of the smaller and/or safety-related IFAM repairs, but many of the highest cost items continue to go unaddressed. The delay in addressing these items increases the potential risk that aging equipment will interrupt future operations, which could jeopardize DOE's plan for safe disposition of enriched uranium (and other hazardous materials) from across the defense nuclear complex. In the interim, to mitigate risks associated with failure of aging equipment, DOE and its contractor should compensate with enhanced surveillance, maintenance, and administrative controls.

The SRS contractor is aggressively preparing to resume spent fuel processing at H-Canyon later this year; however, DOE still has not conclusively identified and determined the scope and quantities of the materials that will be processed, and over what time period. This uncertainty makes it even more difficult for the contractor to decide which upgrades to pursue.

Therefore, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requests DOE submit a report within 90 days of receipt of this letter providing a schedule for completing known upgrades necessary to support the H-Canyon mission, and DOE's plans for evaluating and addressing age-related degradation in H-Canyon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter S. Winokur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being the most prominent.

Peter S. Winokur, Ph.D.
Chairman

Enclosure

c: Mr. Jack R. Craig
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.