



**Department of Energy**  
**National Nuclear Security Administration**  
Washington, DC 20585

DEC 7 2001

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to your Technical Report #29, *Criticality Safety at Department of Energy Defense Nuclear Facilities* (TECH 29), the Secretary of Energy forwarded a report on May 30, 2001, which detailed the Department's path forward for addressing the observations outlined in TECH 29 and assigned responsibility for overseeing related criticality safety improvements to me. The report contained four specific commitments. The following two commitments have been completed:

Commitment Statement: Field Office Managers will review their contractors' self-improvement plans to ensure that these plans address the issue of criticality safety engineers spending an appropriate amount of time in operating areas.

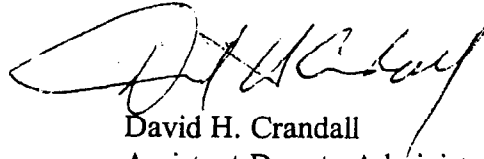
The following Field Office Managers completed a review of their contractor self-improvement plans: Albuquerque, Chicago, Idaho, Oak Ridge, Oakland, Richland, River Protection, Rocky Flats, Savannah River, and Y-12. Each site reported that its review of contractor self-improvement plans either validated the adequacy of criticality safety engineer presence in operating areas or committed to implement improvements in this area.

Commitment Statement: Consistent with the recommendation in the Office of Environment, Safety and Health (EH) Report, the Nuclear Criticality Safety Program Management Team will task its Criticality Safety Support Group (CSSG) to review EH's Nuclear Safety Rule draft guides and provide formal comments to ensure that an appropriate and clear relationship between criticality safety evaluations/controls and authorization basis documents is addressed in the guidance, and that surveillance and configuration management of criticality safety design features are also addressed.

On July 26, 2001, the CSSG provided written comments on the draft guides to EH-1. A copy of the CSSG comments was informally provided to your staff. The Office of EH made changes to the guides based on the CSSG comments prior to publishing the guides. We will continue to work with EH to assure that the guidance is applied uniformly and appropriately across the complex. I will keep you informed about our progress in this area as requested in your letter dated July 20, 2001, regarding the path to closure of Recommendation 97-2.



I will continue to oversee criticality safety improvements related to TECH 29 and inform you when the remaining two commitments are completed.



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