



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585
October 17, 2002

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter to me dated July 19, 2002, conveying the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board's concern over worker protection in the Tritium Extraction Facility (TEF) that is currently in the construction phase at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) welcomes the Board's input on this subject and, like the Board, is very interested in enhancing the safety of TEF workers. As you stated in your letter, your staff is working with my staff to explore effective and adequate safety features to provide for worker safety.

The NNSA is currently taking formal action to add the seismic monitor and alarm system scope to the TEF project as part of the ongoing Title II rebaselining action. It is our conclusion that worker safety can be increased by providing this low-cost advanced notice of a seismic event. This could allow workers to exit the TEF process areas quickly, and minimize their possible exposure to radiological hazards as well as industrial hazards during egress from the buildings.

Prior to final installation of the seismic detection and alarm system in the TEF, the NNSA will test the planned system in the existing 233-H facility at the SRS. We have determined this test is necessary in order to ensure that proven equipment and processes are used in the TEF. Enclosed is a report that describes the 233-H seismic detection and alarm system test plan. Other alternatives to the seismic monitoring system are cost prohibitive, do not provide a significant safety increase to the in-facility worker, are not feasible to retrofit in the facility and, therefore, are not being pursued.



Thank you again for your input and continued support of the NNSA's strategic goals. Should you have any questions or concerns relative to this matter, please contact Ms. Maureen Hunemuller at 803-208-3689.

Sincerely,



Everet H. Beckner
Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs

Enclosure

cc w/enclosure:
M. Whitaker, S-3.1
M. Hunemuller, NNSA-SRSO