

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

February 7, 1992

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

Dear Mr. Conway:

Your letter, dated December 19, 1991, forwarded your reporting requirement pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2286b(d) to inform the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) well before any decision to increase the K-Reactor's power level above 30 percent of the historical value of its maximum full power. Additionally, you provided three recommendations regarding an increase in operating power beyond 30 percent.

The DNFSB will be informed well before any decision is made to increase reactor power level above 30 percent of the historical value of maximum full power. I accept the DNFSB's recommendation to perform additional studies prior to authorizing an increase in reactor operating power above 30 percent. Much analysis has been accomplished to establish the safe operating power level at 30 percent of historical maximum full power. Evaluation of power limits to determine the feasibility of increasing the operating power level is continuing at Westinghouse Savannah River Company and Los Alamos National Laboratory to determine the feasibility of increasing the operating power level.

At the present time, it is not intended that the reactor power be increased to greater than 30 percent due to the reduced need for tritium. If the need to operate at greater than 30 percent is established, then an implementation plan will be developed and forwarded to the DNFSB.

In accordance with 42 U.S.C. 2286d, the Department of Energy's responses to the DNFSB's recommendations will be published in the Federal Register.

Sincerely,

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)