

[DOE LETTERHEAD]

October 19, 1992

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

Dear Mr. Conway:

Your letter to me dated August 26, 1992, contained Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Recommendation 92-6. I accept your recommendation and share your concerns regarding the Department of Energy (DOE) management of Operational Readiness Reviews (ORRs).

Upon completion of the major ORR conducted prior to the resumption of operations at the Savannah River Site K-Reactor, a comprehensive review was made of our experience with major ORRs performed within the DOE. As a result of the lessons learned from those ORRs, I directed that a model plan be developed for the conduct of ORRs for major new facilities undergoing startup, as well as for the restart of facilities which were shutdown for major safety concerns or had not operated for a significant period of time. In addition, a plan for performing graded ORRs was also to be developed.

We are currently in the process of developing a DOE order on startup and restart of nuclear facilities and a DOE standard on the planning and conduct of ORRs. The order will specify when an ORR is required and what level of approval is necessary for the various types of startups and restarts. The standard on ORRs will establish a uniform process for evaluating the overall readiness of nuclear facilities to be started or restarted. The implementation plan to be developed in response to your recommendation will include schedules for the completion of these controlling documents.

Sincerely,

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