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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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December 5, 1997

The Honorable Federico Peña
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Peña:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has evaluated Department of Energy (DOE) draft Order 430.1A, *Life Cycle Asset Management (LCAM)*, dated October 3, 1997, which addresses, in part, the transition of facilities from operations through initial deactivation and follow-on stages of decommissioning. The Board provides the following observations for DOE consideration.

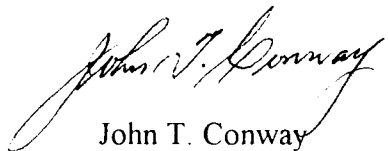
The DOE decommissioning program for its former defense nuclear production facilities is planned as a series of steps. The first step is to identify and stabilize nuclear and other hazardous material. The next near-term step is to remove radioactive residuals of the production processes and achieve sufficient deactivation of process lines, staging and waste storage areas to achieve a low overhead, surveillance and maintenance state, with decommissioning as the next life cycle phase. Subsequent steps are to be prioritized, planned, and then taken to decommission and achieve site restoration per agreements to be established with regulatory authorities. These various steps may or may not be continuous. The Board believes the decommissioning activities should be viewed as a continuum of risk reduction actions that are conducted in as seamless fashion as possible. The target points for each action stage need to be defined and the intended deactivated end state needs to be clearly documented. This is particularly important when the decommissioning activity is not continuous. Although the Board envisions its oversight of the DOE decommissioning program for defense nuclear facilities will diminish as the deactivation efforts reduce the residual risks (Board Policy Statement S-3, dated August 19, 1996), the Board believes it is necessary for DOE to ensure that this step-wise decommissioning process does not proceed beyond the initial deactivation step without reasonable assurance that subsequent steps leading to eventual restoration can and will be safely conducted. The Board looks to this LCAM Order and associated guides to provide the framework for achieving this. The Board is concerned that the re-drafting underway will not do so.

The draft Order in question is significantly different from earlier drafts that were more acceptable to the Board. This draft, and associated documents, is also inconsistent with formal DOE commitments. A March 13, 1997, letter from the Under Secretary committed DOE to (1) add appropriate requirements and guidance from Order 5820.2A to the LCAM Order, (2) link specific handbooks and guides to the LCAM Order, and (3) complete the Facility Disposition Manual.

Not only has DOE failed to meet these commitments, but the latest LCAM Order and associated guidance have retreated from the level of safety incorporated in previous documents. Most important, a Contractor Requirements Document has been omitted. This is inappropriate for an Order that applies to contractor work. Furthermore, the set of draft directives submitted to the Board earlier this year approached facility dispositioning in a systematic manner by integrating detailed proven techniques, such as Deactivation Endpoint methods. But the most recent documents, reflecting a shift in direction, do not even identify safety as an objective, nor is there an adequate crosswalk to identify the disposition of existing decommissioning guidelines. The Facility Disposition Manual, which established a systematic approach to facility disposition, has been discontinued. The Deactivation Handbook, which provided Deactivation Endpoint methods, has been superseded by a Guide that eliminates these methods and many other helpful guidelines. The Board believes that many safety-related practices captured in these earlier documents are good and should be retained. In summary, the LCAM Order redrafting effort requires a course correction if it is to provide meaningful guidance for DOE's deactivation and decommissioning program. Accordingly, the Board requests, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), that DOE provide within the next 45 days, a report that lays out the proposed path forward (e.g., schedule and method for resolution of concerns raised in this letter) including identification of the Office of Principal Interest and the individual assigned responsibility for leading the effort.

You can be assured of the Board's continued cooperation in this effort.

Sincerely,



John T. Conway
Chairman

c: The Honorable Alvin L. Alm
Mr. Franklin G. Peters
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.