

**[DNFSB LETTERHEAD]**

January 6, 1997

The Honorable Hazel R. O'Leary  
Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary O'Leary:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) received your letter of [November 12, 1996](#), transmitting the Department of Energy's (DOE) [Implementation Plan](#) for Board [Recommendation 96-1](#), which addresses process safety at the Savannah River Site's In-Tank Precipitation Facility (ITP). The proposed Implementation Plan outlines a chemical testing program intended to define the processes by which flammable gases are generated, retained, and released in the ITP tanks, and a strategy for using this information to develop effective safety systems and controls for ITP. The plan adequately addresses the issues raised by Recommendation 96-1 and conforms to the standards set forth in the Board's Policy Statement Number 1, "Criteria for Judging the Adequacy of DOE Responses and Implementation Plans for DNFSB Recommendations" (55 Fed. Reg. 43398). It is therefore acceptable to the Board.

The Board was disheartened to find that there have been several significant operational mishaps at ITP during the past month, despite the high level of management attention being applied to ITP operations. Ventilation for Tank 48 was briefly lost on two occasions in November, once because of an equipment problem and once because of poor conduct of maintenance. During the same month, facility operators failed to aim the Tank 48 mixing pumps properly during a tetraphenylborate addition, and Tank 48's variable-depth sampling system failed. These problems highlight the need to carry out the investigations outlined in the Recommendation 96-1 Implementation Plan in a thorough and deliberate manner, and to ensure that the required safety functions are properly implemented before large-scale in-plant testing commences at ITP.

The Board appreciates the commitment demonstrated by DOE to working closely with our staff during the development of this Implementation Plan. We look forward to continuing to work closely with DOE and its contractors throughout the implementation process.

Sincerely,

***John T. Conway***  
Chairman

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