

**[DNFSB LETTERHEAD]**

June 25, 1997

The Honorable Federico Peña  
Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Peña:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) acknowledges receipt of your letter of April 25, 1997, regarding the Department of Energy's (DOE) efforts to revise the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 93-3, *Improving the Technical Capability in the Defense Nuclear Facilities Programs*. Your commitment to providing the leadership necessary to make excellence in nuclear safety management a reality at DOE is appreciated.

With this in mind, the Board would like to call your attention to a DOE handbook published in November 1996 as a result of a DOE/Board Joint Off-Site Conference on technical competence, held in June 1996. This handbook, *Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining High Quality Technical Staff -- A Manager's Guide to Administrative Flexibilities*, provides a number of useful tools for line managers to enhance DOE's efforts to recruit, retain, and train a high-quality technical staff. The handbook also contains a technical excellence policy statement. However, our staff has found that this handbook is not part of the DOE Directives System and has been given limited visibility and usage in the field.

The Board believes it would be beneficial for the DOE senior line managers, who will be meeting in Denver this week, to reevaluate the information in this handbook, especially the level of responsibility and approval required for various staffing actions contained in Appendix A, and take what steps are deemed necessary to improve the handbook's ownership, distribution and usage. As always, the Board's staff is available to meet with your staff on this subject.

Sincerely,

**John T. Conway**  
Chairman

c: The Honorable Archer L. Durham  
The Honorable Victor H. Reis  
The Honorable Alvin L. Alm  
The Honorable Tara J. O'Toole  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.