



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

November 22, 2000

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear ^{John}Mr. Chairman:

With this letter I am pleased to report completion of two commitments found in the Department's 2000-1 Implementation Plan. The following commitments are proposed for closure:

222 Begin preliminary design for the HEU Blend Down Project at Savannah River Site - October 2000

Design work on the project began on November 2, 2000.

306 Complete repackaging of all salts at Rocky Flats - December 2000

Repackaging of salts was completed early on November 8, 2000.

I will also take this opportunity to formally notify you of projected delays in completion of several of our commitments contained in the Department's 2000-1 Implementation Plan. We are in the process of preparing an Implementation Plan revision for the Secretary's approval which will be provided to you by the end of December 2000. We will provide an updated status of these commitments at that time, as well as any necessary changes to the commitment dates as appropriate. The commitments in question and their current status are described below.

110 Complete brushing and repackaging of plutonium metal inventory at the Hanford Plutonium Finishing Plant - March 31, 2001

At the time the last IP revision was prepared, Hanford was working with SRS to put together a test plan for developing a first of a kind outer container welding system. After further development of the test plan, it became apparent that the delivery date for the system would be February 2001. With this delivery date, the March 2001 commitment to complete brushing and packaging the metal inventory can not be met. At this time, the Department estimates



that this material will be placed in inner containers by March 2001 and in outer containers by August 2001. The Department will be prepared to provide you with additional details and a revised path forward in December 2000.

117W Begin Fuel Removal from K-West Basin to the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility - November 30, 2000

While progress continues to be made toward removal of fuel from K-West Basin, DOE does not believe the contractor will initiate removal before November 30. Completion of the contractor second Phase ORR at the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility has been extended to November 22 and the DOE verification and ORR will be conducted during the last week of November. The Contractor and DOE-RL are aggressively working to close prestart items and complete readiness reviews safely and efficiently. Following closure of all prestart items from both the contractor and DOE ORRs, startup will be initiated.

221 Complete DOE/TVA interagency agreement for off-specification fuel program - August 31, 2000

As I wrote to you in my letter dated September 27, 2000, the Department had expected to complete this agreement in October 2000. A recently discovered problem with one of the lead test assemblies being tested by TVA must be resolved before TVA will sign the agreement. At this time, we estimate a delay until at least January 2001 before resolving this problem. This delay does not impact the program schedule, since commencement of the Preliminary Design for the HEU Blend Down Project (Commitment 222) has already been completed.

304 Start packaging metal or oxide into 3013 containers at Rocky Flats - October 31, 2000

The technical approach for meeting the commitment to start packaging plutonium to meet DOE standard 3013 has not changed. The startup schedule has slipped from October 2000 to March 2001. This startup delay is primarily driven by delays in the completion of construction of the plutonium oxide stabilization gloveboxes and furnaces. Longer than expected procurement of critical parts and longer than expected fabrication and final installation in Building 371 caused this construction delay. This

delay in construction has caused a corresponding delay in the overall packaging and stabilization system testing, issuing the operating and maintenance procedures, and completing engineer and operator qualifications. Additionally, it has taken longer than expected to train and qualify operators to safely operate the automated packaging and welding portion of the system.

The site will make its original commitment of completing packaging to the 3013 standard by May 2002. The site will produce about 2000 3013 containers. To produce this amount of 3013 containers by May 2002, the site will have to package about 7 cans per working day. The system is capable of producing about 12 cans per day. The system's production capability and the ability to work on off-days provide sufficient contingency to meet the May 2002 completion date.

307 Complete repackaging of all Rocky Flats ash - December 31, 2000

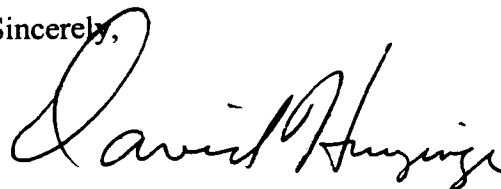
Residue processing at Rocky Flats was on hold for 2 months due to a safety-related shutdown beginning in June 2000. The original schedule for completion of ash packaging cannot be recovered. Our revised path forward, to complete repackaging of the ash along with the remaining residues in Building 371 by May 2002, was described to the Board Members in a briefing by Patty Bubar of my office and representatives of the Rocky Flats Field Office on November 9, 2000. This revised path forward will be included in the December 2000 Implementation Plan revision.

505 Submit revision to Los Alamos National Laboratory portion of the 2000-1 Implementation Plan - October 31, 2000

Due to the need to resolve issues raised during the briefing you received from Mr. David Beck of the Office of Defense Programs on October 20, 2000, the Department will need to delay submission of the revision for LANL's program until December 2000. At that time the Department will also respond to the concerns raised in your letter to the Secretary dated October 23, 2000. Between now and then, we plan to meet with your staff to insure a better understanding of the Department's plans and their basis.

We continue to closely track progress on all Recommendation 2000-1 commitments and will keep you and your staff apprized of our progress. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 586-5151.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David G. Huizenga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "H".

David G. Huizenga
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Integration and Disposition
Office of Environmental Management

cc:
M. Whitaker, S-3.1