

John T. Conway, Chairman
A.J. Eggenberger, Vice Chairman
John E. Mansfield

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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November 15, 2002

The Honorable Everet H. Beckner
Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0104

Dear Dr. Beckner:

While meeting with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) on October 28, 2002, you discussed the potential need to restart disassembly and inspection operations for the W84 Program in advance of completing the Seamless Safety for the 21st Century (SS-21) process. The Board recognizes that the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) needs to maintain an aggressive surveillance program to ensure that latent or age-related safety issues are identified as early as possible, thereby allowing the greatest opportunity for prevention or mitigation.

However, the Board wishes to emphasize that gathering W84 surveillance data still requires an adequate safety basis. The applicable safety principles have been institutionalized by NNSA in its Integrated Safety Management System, and further focused on nuclear weapon operations through implementation of the Board's Recommendation 98-2, *Safety Management at the Pantex Plant*. In the long term, these safety principles will be implemented in the W84 Program through application of the SS-21 process. For the interim surveillance project, once NNSA has clearly defined the scope of work, the operating contractor must identify the hazards associated with that scope of work and develop appropriate controls, defending the adequacy of this safety basis to the authorizing official. Thereafter, properly tailored readiness and nuclear explosive safety reviews—also key components of the Integrated Safety Management process—can be conducted. Only then can work be performed in a safe and deliberate manner.

We wish to assure you that the Board remains committed to assisting in any way possible to safely meeting the operational schedules at the Pantex Plant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John T. Conway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mr. David E. Beck
Mr. Daniel E. Glenn
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.