



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

June 17, 2002

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is an interim response to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) letter of May 13, 2002, which noted continuing concerns related to the fire protection in the wet chemistry area of Building 9212 (B-1 Wing) at the Y-12 National Security Complex (Y-12). We agree that certain safety-related administrative controls may not be best suited for supporting long-term (10 to 15 years) operation of the wet chemistry process systems. Accordingly, our February 2002 approvals of the Basis for Interim Operations (BIO) and Operational Safety Requirements for Building 9212, which address the wet chemistry process, accepted the risk during limited operations to reduce the excess quantities of organic solvent in the inactive columns and for near-term operations.

Operating wet chemistry processes, while relying upon the current combination of administrative and engineered controls from the B-1 Wing Fire Protection Program, is considered a necessary interim measure. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Y-12 Site Office, in its approval of the BIO, requested BWXT Y-12 to develop a long-term fire protection approach for B-1 Wing. The BWXT recommended long-term fire protection plan and supporting safety and cost analyses for B-1 Wing is expected to be presented to NNSA for our review and approval in June 2002. We will share this information with the Board Staff.

We will provide an updated response in July 2002, which addresses the NNSA decision on fixed fire suppression in B-1 Wing of Building 9212 and the resolution of the other issues identified in the staff report included in your letter.



If you have any questions concerning our approach for improving the fire protection in B-1 Wing at Y-12, please contact me or have your staff contact Rodney Lehman at (301) 903-6104.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Gordon
Administrator

cc: M. Whitaker, S-3.1