

John T. Conway, Chairman  
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# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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March 31, 2003

The Honorable Linton Brooks  
Acting Administrator  
of the National Nuclear Security Administration  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear Ambassador Brooks:

The staff of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) recently reviewed the status of fire safety improvement projects at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Based on discussions between the Board's staff and representatives of the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Board understands that funding to complete the projects is available. The Board requests to be notified if the scheduled completion dates are delayed. The projects and current schedules are as follows:

- The Partial Site-wide Fire Alarm Replacement Project is scheduled to be baselined in July 2003 and expected to be completed in fiscal year (FY) 2005. This project will significantly upgrade the site-wide fire alarm system, which proved to be unreliable during the Cerro Grande fire and for which procurement of replacements parts is becoming increasingly difficult.
- A related Recommendation 2000-2, *Configuration Management, Vital Safety Systems*, Phase II assessment for the upgraded site-wide fire alarm system and reporting infrastructure is to begin this month. This assessment may lead to the conclusion that additional upgrades to the site-wide fire alarm system are necessary.
- The Waste Management Risk Mitigation Project at the Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility is scheduled for completion of construction in September 2004 and operation during FY 2005. In addition to addressing damages from the Cerro Grande fire, the project will reduce vulnerability to any unintentional release of radioactive waste during an emergency.
- The project to procure modular units for expedited preparation of waste to be transferred to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is scheduled for completion in December 2003. These modular units should accelerate the transport of higher-risk wastes off site.

- A mobile command center is to be delivered in December 2003. As discussed in the Board's letter of November 5, 2001, procurement of this mobile command center will help ensure adequate functionality of the LANL emergency management system during a severe seismic event.

If your staff has any questions on the above, Mr. J. Kent Fortenberry, the Board's Technical Director, at 202-694-7100 will be pleased to respond.

Sincerely,



John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: The Honorable Jessie Hill Roberson  
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.