



Department of Energy

National Nuclear Security Administration
P. O. Box 2050
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831-2050
December 2, 2003



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:

Progress toward reduction of hazards at Y-12 National Security Complex Building 9206 has been a concern of the Board and shared by BWXT Y-12, and the National Nuclear Security Administration Y-12 Site Office (NNSA-YSO). Through a team effort, substantial progress has been made recently toward resolving this concern. The purpose of this letter is to update you on this progress and highlight some future activities that are scheduled.

The extraction systems at Building 9206 have contained uranium-contaminated solutions in out-of-service process equipment since 1994. The potential for leaks could needlessly expose workers to contaminated solutions and substantial cleanup would be required should one of the tanks be breached. On June 23, 2003, a major milestone was reached when the first major drain, the secondary extraction columns, was completed. On October 31, 2003, we completed the initial removal of material from the Primary Extraction system. Completion of these activities removes the largest uranium solution inventory in process equipment and paves the way for future drains. By removing a significant source term, it also addresses a previous discovery condition related to a potential fire at Building 9206.

While this reduction of hazard is an extremely positive development, equally significant is the material disposition activities that dovetailed with the deactivation activities. Close coordination between the Building 9206 Deactivation Project, the Nuclear Material Stewardship Program, the Highly Enriched Uranium Disposition Program Office, and NNSA-YSO staff, has made it possible to disposition more than 80 safe bottles of waste solution. Working in parallel, the disposition project made adequate storage space available at Building 9206 just when those spaces were needed for drained solution. In fact, the safe bottles containing waste solution were cleaned and reused for drained solution saving material cost and reducing waste generation.

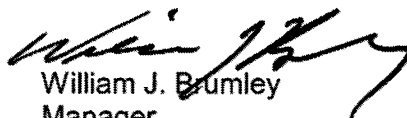
BWXT Y-12 and NNSA-YSO are committed to continuing the momentum toward near term hazard reduction and final deactivation of Building 9206. Now that the extraction columns have been drained, work will continue into fiscal year 2004 to complete the deactivation of both the primary and secondary extraction systems. Early in this fiscal year, we will be removing a significant quantity of clean nitric acid from Building 9206 and shipping the material to the Savannah River Site for reuse. Fiscal year 2004 funding also includes cleanout and deactivation of the Skull Calciner System. This cleanout will resolve the filter house issues discussed in the weekly Site Representative report dated January 25, 2002.

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In summary, we are encouraged that BWXT is making strong progress toward the deactivation of Building 9206 through the completion of these risk reduction activities, and it is our intent to continue the emphasis in this area. If you have any questions regarding our progress or other related issues, please do not hesitate to call me at (865) 576-0752.

Sincerely,



William J. Brumley
Manager
Y-12 Site Office

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