



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

FEB 8 2004

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Ave, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The purpose of this letter is to provide the status of commitments from the Office of Environmental Management (EM) to the Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board (DNFSB) that are currently past due.

Three commitments on Sludge Removal at Hanford as delineated in (a) Commitment 119 of the Implementation Plan (IP) for Recommendation 2000-1 "Stabilization and Storage of Nuclear Material", (b) your April 10, 2003, requirement to report on K-Basins path forward and (c) our November 14, 2003, commitment to provide an update on K-Basins sludge removal:

- The Department continues to evaluate direct disposition strategies to process sludge. Current plans are to remove K-East Basin North Load-Out Pit (NLOP) sludge and treat for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).
- The start of removal of sludge (Commitment 119) from the K-Basins, starting with the NLOP may begin as early as March 2004. NLOP sludge will be moved from the K-Basins to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Bldg. 325 for treatment and packaging into WIPP certifiable containers.
- Other strategies being considered for the remainder of sludge include containerization of K East Basin sludge until evaluation of the various treatment options is complete. Grouting a portion of the sludge in place as part of the Basin demolition is also being considered.

Three commitments (2.9, 2.11, and 2.12) on the low curie salt-waste process as delineated in the IP for 2001-01 "High-Level Waste Management at the Savannah River Site":

- Due to litigation related to waste incidental to reprocessing (WIR) provisions of DOE Order 435.1, our detailed response to address these DNFSB 2001-01 commitments continues to be worked. I expect to have



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these response issues resolved by February 27, 2004.

- The programmatic risk assessment with mitigation strategy (Commitment 2.12) and the low curie salt processing evaluation (Commitment 2.11) are currently undergoing internal review and will be provided as soon as the review is complete.
- The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has notified the Department that they would take no official action on the permit applications pending resolution of the ongoing litigation. The Saltstone Facility permit modifications are required for processing low curie salt feed and disposal of the resulting grouted waste.
- The transfer of first batch of low curie salt cake from Tank 50 (Commitment 2.9) is thus impacted and will not be completed until the above issues have been resolved.

Commitment 2.8 of the Department of Energy's Implementation Plan for Recommendation 2001-1, "High-Level Waste Management at the Savannah River Site" is to provide by January 30, 2004, the conceptual design report (CDR) for the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The CDR is currently under internal review and will be provided as soon as the review is complete.

Two actions from the Secretary's November 22, 2002 letter on the "Quality Assurance Improvement Plan for Defense Nuclear Facilities" are past due. These are (a) issuing EM requirements for Functions, Responsibilities and Authorities (FRA) and Quality Assurance documents and (b) updating the EM Headquarters and Field FRA documents. EM is revising its FRA documents to reflect the reorganization and to flow requirements from the corporate FRA issued on December 31, 2003. A reissued EM FRA document is expected in February 2004, with the EM Field FRAs to follow.

I will provide the Board an update on these issues by April 30, 2004. If you have any questions, please call me at (202) 586-0738.

Sincerely,



Dr. Inés Triay
Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Office of Environmental Management