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Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

March 19, 2004

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In your letter dated January 20, 2004, you asked to be informed of the analysis and corrective measures to be taken regarding a recent event associated with the W56 Dismantlement Program. The Secretary provided the causal analysis to you in a February 25, 2004, letter. Additionally, my staff briefed you on the investigation on February 26, 2004. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is fully committed to resolving the root causes associated with the event and ensuring that the lessons learned are transferred to similar operations.

This letter provides a summary of the corrective measures we are taking to resolve the causes of the subject event. Corrective actions are being taken by four organizations: (1) the Pantex contractor, BWXT Pantex; (2) the Pantex Site Office (PXSO); (3) the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL); and, (4) the NNSA.

The enclosed BWXT Pantex Improvement Plan addresses the judgment-of-needs identified by the W56 Investigation Report. The PXSO conducted a self-assessment and is implementing enhancements to its facility representative training program and improving the site interface with the Nuclear Explosive Safety Change Control Process. The PXSO has shared its corrective actions with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board staff.

The LLNL reviewed its internal procedures and the BWXT Pantex interfaces to identify areas for improvement. The improvements reiterate the importance of the weapon system single point-of-contact within the laboratory, provides a clear statement regarding the laboratory role and responsibilities for reviewing and concurring in the BWXT Pantex nuclear explosive operating procedures and their changes, and reaffirms the importance of performing visual confirmations of weapon configurations, especially for those that involve change control activities.

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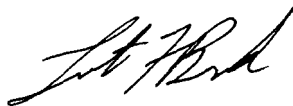
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The NNSA has initiated actions to review and update the Development and Production Manual to clarify expectations for the Nuclear Explosive Operations Change Control Process and to refine how the laboratory weapons responses are incorporated into all authorization bases at the BWXT Pantex. This action is expected to be completed by June 2004.

I have asked Mr. Dan Glenn, Manager of PXSO, to formally transmit the updated BWXT Pantex Improvement Plan. With transmittal of this final plan, we will consider your January 20, 2004, reporting requirement fulfilled. If you have questions, please contact me or Mr. Marty Schoenbauer of my staff at 202-586-1730.

Sincerely,



Linton F. Brooks
Administrator

Enclosure

cc w/o enclosure:
J. McConnell, DNFSB
W. Andrews, DNFSB
M. Whitaker, DR-1

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