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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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October 15, 2007

The Honorable William C. Ostendorff
Principal Deputy Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear Mr. Ostendorff:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) is familiar with the current division of management duties for the defense nuclear facilities at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) through its continuing oversight duties, and understands that the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is proceeding to allow the Management and Operation (M&O) contractor for the NTS to assume full responsibility and accountability for managing and operating all nuclear and radiological facilities at the test site.

The Board supports such a transition. From a health and nuclear safety perspective there are distinct advantages to having the M&O contractor for the NTS responsible for integrating health and safety programs, including operation and management of all defense nuclear facilities. These include among others:

- Integration and uniform application of nuclear standards and practices;
- Consistency in the formality of operations;
- Uniform line oversight (contractor assurance system) by the contractor;
- Better defined roles and responsibilities within the contractor site organization;
- Reduced efforts required of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to manage interfaces between contractors that affect health and safety; and
- Improved and more focused oversight of nuclear operations by the NNSA and Defense Programs.

The Board will closely follow the implementation of actions required to satisfy NNSA's objective. Tasking the M&O contractor with full responsibility and accountability for managing all facilities at the NTS will address line of responsibility issues that the Board has previously communicated to NNSA.

Sincerely,

A. J. Eggenberger
Chairman