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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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June 26, 2007

Admiral Kirkland H. Donald, USN
Deputy Administrator of Naval Reactors
National Nuclear Security Administration
Naval Sea Systems Command
Washington Navy Yard
1240 Isaac Hull Avenue, SE, Stop 8010
Washington, DC 20376-8010

Dear Admiral Donald:

Thank you for your letter of May 3, 2007, providing the recent reports of Naval Reactors on radiological waste disposal and environmental monitoring, occupational safety and health, and occupational radiation exposure, as well as the annual overview of the Naval Reactors program. Once again, these reports display the program's outstanding performance.

I recently reread the comments made by Admiral Rickover in August 1979, subsequent to the accident at Three Mile Island, which detail a set of principles employed by the Naval Reactors program. In his comments, Admiral Rickover reexamined these principles and "confirmed [their] validity... and the necessity of continuing to apply them."

The first principle identified in Admiral Rickover's comments is that of "technical competence." From the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board's (Board) first recommendation; to the guiding principles of Integrated Safety Management, which resulted from a recommendation made by the Board in 1995; to the Board's latest recommendation on criticality safety, the Board has continued to reinforce the belief that this principle is the linchpin on which the safety and reliability of hazardous operations depend. Extending through selection, education, and continuous technical training, the qualification of personnel from headquarters to operators and maintenance staff is paramount. The Board commends Naval Reactors for the example they continue to set in this important area.

Sincerely,

A. J. Eggenberger
Chairman

c: The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.