

Jessie H. Roberson, Vice Chairman  
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**DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES  
SAFETY BOARD**

Washington, DC 20004-2901



March 9, 2015

The Honorable Ernest J. Moniz  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Moniz:

Removal and/or immobilization of plutonium-238 (Pu-238) in Building 235-F remains the most significant activity needed to reduce risk to workers at the Savannah River Site. Your letter dated November 28, 2014 detailed delays and extended deliverable dates in the Recommendation 2012-1 implementation plan schedule. The delays are unfortunate, and we urge you to minimize future delays.

Although several actions to reduce the risk of a full facility fire have been completed, the residual Pu-238 contamination remains a significant hazard in Building 235-F. More than 95 percent of the Pu-238 is located in the Plutonium Fuel Form (PuFF) facility. The hazard analysis for the facility characterizes the Pu-238 contamination as highly dispersible based on material form, resulting in high potential dose consequences associated with a radiological release.

As early as 1991, following an investigation of PuFF cell deterioration, the Department of Energy has on a number of occasions evaluated options and developed plans for Pu-238 decontamination. However, these efforts have not transitioned from planning to execution. Meanwhile the PuFF cells continue to deteriorate. Proceeding with the Pu-238 decontamination effort is necessary to reduce exposure risks to workers and the public. Maintaining the operational expertise of the deactivation crew will be crucial to the safe and timely execution of the decontamination effort.

Sincerely,

  
Jessie Roberson  
Acting Chairman

c: Mr. Mark Whitney  
Mr. Joe Olencz  
Dr. David Moody