



**Department of Energy**  
**Under Secretary for Nuclear Security**  
**Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration**  
**Washington, DC 20585**



August 9, 2019

The Honorable Bruce Hamilton  
Chairman, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board  
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This communication is in response to your June 12, 2019, letter that described concerns regarding Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) access to all phases of the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Group (NESSG) process.

Pursuant to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Supplemental Directive 452.2A, *Nuclear Explosives Safety Evaluation Processes*, NESSG deliberations are collaborative efforts among participants to consider all sides of issues identified during NESSG preparation, training, briefings, and demonstrations. During deliberations, participants discuss potential areas for improvement regarding nuclear explosive safety and other related issues that might warrant documentation in the NESSG report. The deliberation process involves multiple facets of communications where subject matter experts express wide-ranging assessments, thoughts, opinions, and perspectives while considering potential areas for improvement. As such, deliberations demand free and open communications where participants can express their views, challenge each other, and work to adjudicate questions and issues raised. To achieve this open, collaborative environment during deliberations, neither DOE nor NNSA senior leadership participate in deliberations during this specific phase in the overall process.

To address the concerns in the Board's letter, while ensuring that free and open communication continues among NESSG members in order to optimize safety, NNSA will provide the Board's staff a briefing following NESSG deliberation. The purpose of the briefing will be to allow the Board's staff to fully evaluate the implementation of DOE directives and the NESSG's rationale for dispositioning concerns as findings or observations. Any comments, observations, opinions, or recommendations the Board's staff may have are to be provided in writing to the NESSG Chair. At the discretion of the NESSG Chair, such information may be included in the final report. The final report must be signed before any information may be used external to the NESSG process.



If you have any questions, please contact Mr. John Evans, Acting Assistant  
Deputy Administrator for Stockpile Management, at (202) 586-3685.

Sincerely,

  
Lisa E. Gordon-Hagerty