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Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

August 26, 1996

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DIF SAFETY BOARD

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your letter of July 5, 1996, transmitting a trip report documenting the trip of April 29 - May 2, 1996, made by staff of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board).

The report discusses the Board's review of Phase II of the Department's Operational Readiness Review (ORR) of the High-level Liquid Waste Evaporator (Evaporator) at the Idaho Chemical Processing Plant (ICPP), Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Your letter notes that the ORR team identified deficiencies in operating procedures during Phase II of the Evaporator ORR. Through the cooperative efforts between ID, the M&O contractor, and the Defense Board staff, we addressed those deficiencies, thereby enabling successful startup of the Evaporator on June 1, 1996. Therefore, we thank the Board and staff for their contributions to improving the ORR process within DOE.

In looking toward future ORRs, Idaho Operations Office (ID) line management has communicated to the Management and Operations (M&O) contractor its resolve to improve future readiness review procedures. This has been translated into the following contractor actions: 1) development of a procedure or template for defining the necessary level of detail for operating procedures and 2) review of all New Waste Calcining Facility (NWCF) procedures against this template and an enhanced validation process. In addition to the contractor actions, a review and upgrade of the Plan of Action for Department of Energy (DOE) ORR for the NWCF is underway to more clearly underscore line management responsibility for determination of readiness consistent with DOE Order 425.1 and DOE-STD-3006-93. As stated in our response dated June 13, 1996, to your earlier letter on this subject, ID will thoroughly document the process used to verify readiness and review post-start findings to ensure proper categorization.

The contractor has placed additional emphasis on their Management Self-Assessment process as the tool to achieve readiness. DOE-ID will also emphasize the role of the DOE ORR process to independently review readiness to operate. To enhance preparedness for the upcoming NWCF ORR, line management at the



ICPP is soliciting well qualified Headquarters personnel for membership in the upcoming NWCFF ORR team. In addition, ID is collaborating with the Defense Programs' Office of Engineering, Operations, Security and Transition Support (DP-45), and has arranged for DP-45 to lead a three-day training exercise on planning and conducting ORRs. The training will incorporate lessons learned from the Evaporator ORR and ORRs conducted by DP-45. We are pleased that DP-45 has agreed to participate in training and possibly review team membership in order to take advantage of their successful facility review work at the Savannah River Site. All of these efforts should ensure that the ORR process for the NWCFF will be much improved over the Evaporator ORR.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Ron Ramsey, Office of Western Operations, at (301) 903-7981.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alvin L. Alm".

Alvin L. Alm
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management