



The Under Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

JAN 31 1995

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

Dear Mr. Conway:

The purpose of this letter is to confirm the Department's commitment to correct the broad range of defense nuclear safety related staffing deficiencies which the Board has identified in several of its recommendations. To integrate the numerous fragmented initiatives which had been underway in the Department, the Assistant Secretary for Defense Programs, in conjunction with the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, has initiated a comprehensive, program-wide evaluation of Defense Programs staffing. The evaluation will address both the numbers of staff required, as well as the qualifications/competencies that staff members must possess, particularly those related to nuclear safety. The result of this evaluation will be a single statement of Defense Programs staffing requirements which is endorsed by all elements of the Department that are involved in, or control resources required for, the execution of the Defense Programs mission. That statement of requirements will be in the form of a fully justified and defensible staffing profile for Defense Programs Headquarters, operations offices and area/site offices. The staffing profile will address both current and future staffing required to perform the mission, consistent with the Defense Programs strategic plan and projected Defense Programs budgets.

To the best of my knowledge, the Defense Programs staffing evaluation is unique in the history of this Department. This effort must reconcile the competing and potentially conflicting objectives associated with: dramatic changes in the scope, level, and direction of the nuclear weapons program; significant resource constraints; and urgent and critical safety and environmental requirements. For this reason, I see the Defense Programs staffing evaluation as the common thread that ties the various elements of the Defense Programs program and its organization together and ensures that critical recommendations from the Board are acted on effectively.

Defense Programs is moving quickly to define safety specialist positions to utilize the additional hiring authority the Secretary has approved. We are prepared to request dual compensation waivers from the Office of Personnel Management to help us attract highly qualified retired military candidates for these and other safety positions. We will utilize the other compensation incentives, such as recruitment, relocation and retention bonuses, and excepted service hiring authority, which is designed to accelerate the hiring process for positions with special or unique requirements. These excepted authorities are already available to us and do not require Office of Personnel Management approval. We appreciate the assistance that the Board is providing to help us locate qualified candidates.

I would also like to thank the Board for your willingness to participate as a partner with the Department on the Defense Programs staffing evaluation. The knowledge and insight that your staff brings to this project will help us define the criteria that will assure success and design an evaluation process that will meet our success criteria.

I have enclosed a brief interim status report on the Defense Programs staffing evaluation and related activities. The complexity of the project and its recently expanded scope will require that we take approximately 2 additional months to complete the evaluation. This additional time will ensure that the evaluation results are credible and responsive to both departmental and Defense Board concerns. Thank you again for your support and participation.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Curtis

Enclosure

DEFENSE PROGRAMS STAFFING EVALUATION
INTERIM STATUS REPORT

OBJECTIVE:

Establish a justifiable, defensible and technically proficient staffing profile for DP Headquarters, operations offices and area offices to perform the DP mission (which includes nuclear safety and other technical and administrative responsibilities), consistent with the budget, both today and in the future.

MAJOR MILESTONES:

- Project initiated with scope limited to HQ, 11/14/94.
- Project redefined to include total program, HQ and field, 12/20/94.
- Project plan established, DP/HR buy-in achieved, 12/21/94.
- Working meeting with field representatives, 1/11/94.
- DP strategic planning meeting, 1/12&13/95.
- Data collection survey 1/17-27/95.
- Senior management workshop, 2/8,9&10/95.
- Recommendations to ASDP, early March.
- Mechanism defined by DP and HR for out placement of displaced DP employees, 3/31/95.

PROCESS: The process to be used for the staffing evaluation is:

- Provide senior DP and Departmental officials with a clear statement of what constitutes "success" for DP.
- Present these officials with information that defines the DP program as it currently exists.
- Present them with additional information which enables them to consider what modifications to the program are required, and what additional modifications could or should be made, to make it better.
- Provide a forum where these senior officials, acting as a group with a set of common (not parochial) goals, can collectively consider and reach conclusions on how DP must be changed to assure success.

The information that will be made available to these senior officials will summarize:

- Program goals consistent with the revised DP strategic plan.
- Organization structures.
- Management philosophies and processes.
- Resource deployments and constraints.
- Organizational and programmatic roles/responsibilities.

- Safety, environmental and other technical program requirements.
- Financial management, Federal personnel and other administrative requirements.

STATUS: The project is on schedule and has been endorsed by senior Departmental management. Several critical items are summarized below:

- The staffing evaluation will be targeted toward satisfying a set of success criteria which are currently under development. These criteria will establish a baseline to enable DP and other stakeholders to evaluate the extent to which the project's objectives are actually realized.
- All initiatives relating to DP staffing resource requirements have been integrated into this evaluation. The results of this evaluation will be integrated into the Departmental Strategic Alignment recently initiated by the Secretary.
- The staffing review will define the numbers and the qualifications of facility representatives required for DP sites and facilities.
- The issues of selection, training, and qualifications of key staff will be addressed in the staffing evaluation.
- The staffing review will consider the staffing impact of the retention of, or access to, technical expertise not currently required, but which may be needed in the future.
- The ASDP has authority to fill any or all of the newly approved safety specialist hires in DP Headquarters using excepted service authority. These hires will be used to address urgent and critical safety analysis and operations deficiencies. Additional hires are pending the results of the staffing evaluation.
- DP has already begun utilization of the excepted service authority provided by the fiscal year 1995 Defense Authorization. Utilization will be expanded to attract additional highly qualified safety professionals.
- DP will seek dual-compensation waivers where applicable for highly qualified military retirees who are candidates for safety related positions.
- DP will utilize recruitment, relocation, and retention bonuses where appropriate to build and retain a technically competent work force.
- DP and HR will develop a mechanism through which DP employees, who are identified as lacking skills in nuclear safety areas as a result of the staffing evaluation, will be provided out placement assistance to facilitate their redeployment to other DP positions, other Departmental programs or placement outside the Department.

- The staffing evaluation will baseline DP resource levels, procedures, management and organization structure, and operating philosophy against comparable government and private sector operations.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Following his acceptance of recommendations, the ASDP will communicate them to principal stakeholders (including the Board) to facilitate understanding and buy-in.
- An implementation plan will be developed immediately following stakeholder briefings. This will permit the accommodation of stakeholder comments. The plan will include specific corrective actions required to satisfy success criteria.
- Where recommendations are within DP authority, implementation will be initiated immediately following stakeholder briefings.
- Where recommendations require Secretarial approval, they will be presented to her immediately following stakeholder briefings.
- As recommendations are approved for implementation, specific performance indicators will be developed and monitored to measure progress toward full satisfaction of the success criteria.
- Corrective action plans will be established to correct each deficiency addressed by an approved recommendation.
- Although corrective actions will begin immediately following the approval of recommendations, it is clear that full implementation will require up to a year.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING:

- A senior DP official will be assigned responsibility for successful development and execution of each corrective action plan.
- Quarterly corrective action plan reports will be provided to the ASDP and the DP Management Council.