

Peter S. Winokur, Chairman  
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**DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES  
SAFETY BOARD**

Washington, DC 20004-2901



May 16, 2014

The Honorable Frank G. Klotz  
Administrator  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear Administrator Klotz:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) has become concerned with the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) path forward on nuclear criticality safety at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). On June 27, 2013, the LANL Director paused programmatic operations in the Plutonium Facility, in part, to enable laboratory management to address nuclear criticality safety concerns identified by both internal and external assessments. During this pause, NNSA briefed the Board on a strategy to develop criticality safety evaluations (CSE) for higher-risk operations prior to resumption. The Board is aware that this plan has evolved such that the LANL Director intends to resume many higher-risk operations without first developing compliant CSEs.

Department of Energy directives and industry consensus standards require that CSEs unambiguously demonstrate how fissionable material operations will remain subcritical under both normal and credible abnormal conditions. These CSEs identify controls to ensure safe operation. Therefore, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requests a briefing from NNSA within 14 days on how the NNSA will ensure that adequate controls will be identified as the laboratory resumes higher-risk operations in the Plutonium Facility.

Sincerely,

Peter S. Winokur, Ph.D.  
Chairman

c: Ms. Kimberly Davis Lebak  
Mr. Joe Olencz