

July 18, 2001

The Honorable Francis S. Blake  
Deputy Secretary of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Mr. Blake:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) would like to commend the Department of Energy's (DOE) Facility Representative Program. The success of the Facility Representative Program is a positive example of how DOE can build a cadre of highly competent technical personnel who are demanding customers out in the field.

The prestige and influence of the Facility Representatives appears to have increased, as has recognition of the value of Facility Representatives by DOE senior management. The level of involvement and participation of DOE senior management in the Facility Representative Workshop held May 15–16, 2001, was particularly noteworthy. Although DOE has experienced some difficulty maintaining the required number of qualified Facility Representatives, the Board understands that efforts are now underway to fill Facility Representative vacancies at several sites as well as to accelerate their training and qualification.

The Board considers DOE's Facility Representative Program one of the most useful and productive programs for maintaining the safety of the public and workers. Facility Representatives comprise approximately 10–15 percent of the Federal technical workforce in the Federal Technical Capability Program (FTCP) that deals with defense nuclear facilities. If the same standards, rigor, and discipline were applied to the rest of the Federal technical workforce in the FTCP in the areas of recruiting, hiring, training, education, qualification, and retention, DOE would realize a significant improvement in its ability to perform its safety management functions and national security/environmental cleanup missions.

The Board strongly encourages your personal involvement of applying the best practices from the Facility Representative Program to the entire DOE Federal technical workforce.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.  
Mr. Joseph Arango