

October 31, 2001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-1000

Dear Secretary Abraham:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) recently was provided with a copy of your remarks at the October 15, 2001, Quarterly Leadership Meeting.

On behalf of all the Board Members, I commend you for calling attention to and stressing the major and most important responsibilities expected of the Department of Energy (DOE) managers. By citing "ensuring the safety of our [DOE] employees and of those communities surrounding DOE facilities" as the first of the three expectations you require of your managers, you focused on a key responsibility without detracting from the important other two: i.e., highest standards of security and the recognition of the need to hire the most capable work force. This is in accordance with the stated objectives of the Congress, when it set up the Board.

Of particular importance, was your articulation that DOE's "overarching mission is national security," an objective that for too long a time has not been clearly understood by many, both within and outside the government. The Board Members concur in your identification of four overriding priorities for our national defense programs and your declaration that all our energy programs need to be viewed as essential to national security.

Finally, and equally important, is your message that DOE's science programs and national laboratory work should relate to and support national security missions. It must be understood by the National Laboratories and others in the scientific community that those programs in the areas of basic energy sciences, high energy physics, biology, etc. have always been supported because of their potential contributions to the knowledge base supporting the nation's strength.

The Board agrees with your stated objectives and stands ready to assist you in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.