

January 9, 2003

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) has reviewed your letter of November 22, 2002, transmitting the Department of Energy's (DOE) *Quality Assurance Improvement Plan for Defense Nuclear Facilities*. This plan describes DOE's proposed actions to improve the implementation of quality assurance as practiced by both DOE and its contractors in the design, procurement, construction, operation, and maintenance of vital safety systems.

The Board considers that the proposed actions in the plan when implemented should result in improved quality assurance practices at defense nuclear facilities. Given that several of the proposed actions will require further definition as more information is gained during the implementation phase, the Board requests DOE to provide updates or revisions to the plan reflecting these developments. The Board also notes that DOE plans to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions in improving the quality of vital safety systems. The Board requests to be kept informed of results of the DOE evaluations.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway  
Chairman

c: Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.