

April 10, 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) received your letter of March 13, 2003, transmitting the Implementation Plan for the Board's Recommendation 2002-1, *Quality Assurance for Safety-Related Software*. The Board has reviewed the Implementation Plan and concluded that the commitments and path forward outlined therein adequately address the issues raised in Recommendation 2002-1.

The Board notes that scheduled completion dates for several of the key commitments to improve the quality of safety-related software in defense nuclear facilities are established by specific deliverables in the Implementation Plan. The Board understands the need to structure the plan in this fashion, but expects that the Department of Energy (DOE) will establish schedules and implement these key commitments in an expeditious manner.

The Board considers the commitment to establish an Office of Quality Assurance reporting to the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health, as discussed in the resolution approach of Section 4.4, *Continuous Improvement*, to be an important step forward. This new office should help resolve the cross-cutting quality issues addressed in this Implementation Plan, as well as in the *Quality Assurance Improvement Plan for Defense Nuclear Facilities*, and issues related to suspect/counterfeit items. Once this office is established, the Functions, Responsibilities, and Authorities Manual must accurately reflect its roles and responsibilities.

Therefore, the Board accepts the proposed Implementation Plan. Our staff will remain in close contact with the Office of Environment, Safety and Health representatives and, once it is established, the Office of Quality Assurance, to follow DOE's progress in implementing Recommendation 2002-1.

Sincerely,

John T. Conway
Chairman

c: The Honorable Linton Brooks
The Honorable Beverly Ann Cook
The Honorable Jessie Hill Roberson
The Honorable Everet H. Beckner
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.