



**The Deputy Secretary of Energy**  
Washington, DC 20585

March 18, 2003

The Honorable John T. Conway  
Chairman  
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board  
625 Indiana Avenue, N.W. (Suite 700)  
Washington, D.C. 20004-2901

Dear Mr. Chairman:

**Reference:** Responsibilities for Increased Monitoring of Progress on Meeting  
Department of Energy (DOE) Commitments to the Defense Nuclear  
Facilities Safety Board

Thank you for meeting with me on March 12, 2003. As we discussed in our meeting, the Secretary and I very much appreciate the contributions the Board makes to our national security through your work. We take our commitments to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) very seriously.

I also appreciated your thoughts about the importance of resolving so-called "cross-cutting issues." As a result of our conversation, I am taking two actions to strengthen DOE's ability to monitor and meet our commitments, and to ensure the effectiveness of actions taken in response to DNFSB recommendations.

First, I am assigning the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health (EH-1) to act as my agent on DOE commitments to the DNFSB, including cross-cutting issues. In this role, EH-1 will regularly monitor and track line management's progress in meeting commitments and will work with line management and individual sites to identify and address obstacles that arise in the course of implementing corrective actions.

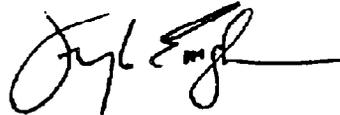
She will also coordinate planning for departmental actions in response to cross-cutting issues that require action by multiple organizations, and she is charged with evaluating planned actions to ensure that collectively they are responsive to the DNFSB concerns and any underlying causes. The Assistant Secretary will identify tasks that need to be completed and work with line management to ensure that necessary tasks are assigned to the proper organization. She will also review resource/budget allocations and sources of funding to ensure that DOE has assigned sufficient resources to complete the needed tasks. Particular emphasis will be placed on tasks that support multiple organizations and/or require funding from multiple organizations.

EH-1 will be responsible for keeping me informed on the status on a monthly basis and identifying problems that require resolution at the Office of the Secretary's level. She will also coordinate with the DOE Representative to the DNFSB and senior line managers, including those within the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), to ensure that the DNFSB is briefed on a regular basis on the status of DNFSB operational concerns with the DOE.

Second, I am directing DOE's Office of Independent Oversight and Performance Assurance (OA) to substantially increase its focus on providing independent oversight of line management, including within the NNSA, and EH efforts in addressing commitments to the DNFSB. OA will devote additional attention to evaluating progress by individual sites, and where appropriate to evaluating departmental progress on issues of a cross-cutting nature. As part of this effort, OA will devote particular attention to reviewing specific instances where the Department is not on schedule to meet commitments, with emphasis on identifying causes of delays and potential actions to achieve timely closure. OA will also assess the effectiveness of actions taken to verify that, as implemented, they are responsive to the original weaknesses and underlying causes. The OA Director will brief me quarterly on the results of independent oversight activities in these areas.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss these important issues. Please contact me with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle E. McSlarrow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kyle E. McSlarrow