



Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Washington, DC 20585

February 7, 2003

The Honorable John T. Conway
Chairman
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As committed in my September 24, 2002, letter to you, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is providing our strategy to improve the characterization, storage and disposition of inactive actinides. It is clear to me that we need an organized approach that will ensure senior Headquarters managers are continuously involved in the programmatic and safety aspects of this work. Accordingly, I am undertaking a three-part effort.

First, as always, we will continue to address imminent public and worker safety concerns associated with actinide storage immediately as they are identified. Appropriate corrective actions will eliminate or mitigate the risk.

Second, I will be directing the creation of an inactive actinides program management approach that will collect, on an annual basis, prioritized projects from each site. A designated Headquarters program manager will integrate these priorities across sites, and those projects that merit immediate investment will be funded, and the work directed and tracked. I will provide you with additional details on this process as it is developed, but it is my intention to complete the first data call and review in FY 2003 and to fund specific tasks in FY 2004. Thereafter we will forecast an annual budget within the Future Years Nuclear Security Program and review priorities annually. This will be a comprehensive approach that will include characterization, packaging, storage and disposition in whatever combination best addresses the most critical safety requirements and programmatic needs.

Finally, you have pointed out numerous deficiencies related to the protocols and procedures used throughout the inactive materials management process from identification to disposition. We agree with the concerns expressed in your May 20, 2002, letter and are committed to updating aspects of our system that are outdated and ineffective.

The attached "Report to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board on the Management of Inactive Actinide Materials at NNSA Sites," was prepared by the Inactive Actinides Working Group and presents three strategies: (1) Protocol for Acceptance and Retention of Nuclear Materials, (2) Material Characterization and Storage Adequacy, and (3) Disposition. This Report identifies planning and implementation of activities and milestones in FY 2003-04 on which we will keep you apprised, including addressing your December 31, 2002, comments. A briefing to the Board will be scheduled to present our path forward.



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If you have any questions or require further information, you may contact me, or your staff may contact Diane Larsen of my staff (301) 903-7316.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Everet H. Beckner".

Everet H. Beckner
Deputy Administrator
for Defense Programs

Enclosure