



Recommendation No. 128

July 25, 2000

DNFSB Response to IP-3

Background

On July 14, 2000, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) responded to the Department of Energy Implementation Plan, Revision 3, which updated DOE remediation plans for nuclear materials risks originally cited in DNFSB Recommendation 94-1, followed up in Recommendation 2000-1. While the board notes satisfactory progress on many of the vulnerabilities originally identified, it expresses dissatisfaction with the timing of and uncertainties with certain aspects of the plan, to a large degree at the Savannah River Site.

A key concern of the board is that budgetary limitations have forced a schedule delay that imposed a significant increase in risks in the plan for SRS nuclear materials stabilization and storage. It specifically disagrees with DOE's decision not to advise Congress that the 94-1/2000-1 implementation plan was not adequately funded, a legal obligation in the board's view.

While some of the plan's delays are considered unrecoverable, the board suggests that DOE should undertake an interim upgrade of the plutonium packaging to DOE Interim Safe Storage Criteria (ISSC) to reduce risks during the period before the completion of facilities planned for this metal's stabilization and storage program.

Comment

The SRS CAB has had continuing concern over annual budget caps that have imposed limitations or delays to important remediation programs for site cleanup and safe stewardship of nuclear materials and the environment. Direct competition between waste management needs such as the critical ITP replacement program and the 94-1 IP appears to impose safety and economic risks that could otherwise be avoided. The DNFSB view that DOE is required to advise Congress of this situation is therefore considered very important by the CAB.

The SRS CAB is concerned whether present packaging of the plutonium is sufficient for the period of time prior to final packaging and storage, particularly as the study on the use of Building 235-F is still underway.

Recommendation

The SRS CAB recommends that DOE:

- Go to Congress and the President and request additional funding as recommended by the DNFSB.
- Advise the CAB by September 25, 2000 of its specific response to DNFSB's recommendation on interim plutonium packaging, including the cost and timing of proposed steps that would be undertaken.

References

- DNFSB letter from John Conway, DNFSB Chairman, to Bill Richardson, Secretary of Energy, on review of DOE Implementation Plan of May 31, 2000, July 14, 2000.

Agency Responses

[*Department of Energy-SR*](#)