

Issued in Washington, DC, on July 14, 1997.

**Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.,**

*Departmental Representative to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.*

**The Secretary of Energy**

*Washington, DC 20585*

July 14, 1997.

The Honorable John T. Conway,  
*Chairman, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, 625 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20004.*

Dear Mr. Chairman: This letter acknowledges receipt of Recommendation 97-2 issued on May 19, 1997, addressing the need for improved criticality safety practices and programs to alleviate potential adverse impacts on safety and productivity of Department of Energy operations. The Department accepts Recommendation 97-2 to assure the continuation of criticality safety at defense nuclear facilities.

To acquire a common understanding of issues raised in Recommendation 97-2, we surveyed criticality safety professionals at our major sites. The survey identified the following three general understandings which will be the foundation for the Implementation Plan.

- The Department has not efficiently integrated criticality safety as part of work planning and implementation uniformly across the complex.
- We are aware of emerging criticality safety issues as the Department transitions from nuclear weapons production to materials stabilization; facilities deactivation, decontamination and decommissioning; and packaging, transportation and dispositioning of fissile materials.
- The Department needs to develop new guidance and technical support resources to address criticality safety issues.

The Department recognized the need to integrate safety into its work. Initiatives are being implemented, as appropriate, to apply graded or tailored approaches to the work and any associated hazards. We are focussing on improved work performance and feedback as part of an overall Integrated Safety Management program.

The Department is aware of the challenges posed by the need to stabilize nuclear materials, deactivate contaminated facilities, and provide secure and safe storage of fissile materials. Therefore, our response to Recommendation 97-2 will be tailored to address criticality safety concerns where they exist. In conjunction with key line managers, the Department will form a group of criticality safety experts from the 2 Department of Energy and contractor communities to provide advice and assistance in development of a Recommendation 97-2 Implementation Plan. To ensure efficient operations of this criticality safety program and to build upon the successes of activities under way, we plan to integrate continuing actions under the 93-2 Implementation Plan into the 97-2 Implementation Plan, and propose closure of Recommendation 93-2.

Dr. Robin Staffin, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Development,

Office of Defense Programs; and Mr. David Huizenga, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Materials and Facilities Stabilization, Office of Environmental Management, are the responsible co-managers for preparing the Implementation Plan. Dr. Staffin will serve as the principal point of contact with the Board and will work with you and your staff to develop an acceptable Implementation Plan meeting our mutual expectations.

Sincerely,  
Federico Peña  
[FR Doc. 97-20020 Filed 7-29-97; 8:45 am]  
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

**Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board, Rocky Flats**

**AGENCY:** Department of Energy.

**ACTION:** Notice of open meeting.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463, 86 Stat. 770) notice is hereby given of the following Advisory Committee meeting: Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB), Rocky Flats.

**DATES:** Thursday, August 7, 1997, 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** Westminster City Hall (Lower-level Multi-purpose Room), 4800 West 92nd Avenue, Westminster, CO.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ken Korkia, Board/Staff Coordinator, EM SSAB-Rocky Flats, 9035 North Wadsworth Parkway, Suite 2250, Westminster, CO 80021, phone: (303) 420-7855, fax: (303) 420-7579.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Purpose of the Board:* The purpose of the Board is to make recommendations to DOE and its regulators in the areas of environmental restoration, waste management, and related activities.

*Purpose of the Meeting:* The Board will hear from an independent contractor it hired to review Rocky Flats environmental monitoring systems. During the spring of 1996, a Rocky Flats Community Needs Assessment (RFCNA) was conducted to identify the community's needs and concerns during the cleanup of Rocky Flats. One of the themes emerging from the study was that the public wanted to ensure they were protected from off-site radioactive releases. Having a reliable, continuous environmental monitoring program is a necessary component of that protection. As a follow-up to the RFCNA, the Board decided to contract with an outside, independent organization to review and assess the current environmental monitoring systems in place at the site.

This February, the firm Parker-Hall, Inc. (PHI) of Boise, Idaho, was selected to perform the review. PHI will now present the results of its study, as well as recommendations for change.

In addition, the Board will discuss a draft recommendation prepared by its Plutonium and Special Nuclear Materials Committee. The recommendation addresses environmental, health, and safety vulnerabilities associated with highly enriched uranium; general health and safety issues; and specific items such as criticality safety, fire protection, and management oversight.

**Tentative Agenda**

1. Parker-Hall, Inc. (PHI) Review, Results and Recommendations
2. Plutonium and Special Nuclear Materials Committee draft recommendation

*Public Participation:* The meeting is open to the public. Written statements may be filed with the Committee either before or after the meeting. Individuals who wish to make oral statements pertaining to agenda items should contact Ken Korkia at the address or telephone number listed above. Requests must be received 5 days prior to the meeting and reasonable provision will be made to include the presentation in the agenda. The Designated Federal Official is empowered to conduct the meeting in a fashion that will facilitate the orderly conduct of business. Each individual wishing to make public comment will be provided a maximum of 5 minutes to present their comments.

*Minutes:* The minutes of this meeting will be available for public review and copying at the Freedom of Information Public Reading Room, 1E-190, Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585 between 9:00 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday-Friday, except Federal holidays. Minutes will also be available at the Public Reading Room located at the Board's office at 9035 North Wadsworth Parkway, Suite 2250, Westminster, CO 80021; telephone (303) 420-7855. Hours of operation for the Public Reading Room are 9:00 am and 4:00 pm on Monday through Friday. Minutes will also be made available by writing or calling Deb Thompson at the Board's office address or telephone number listed above.

Issued at Washington, DC, on July 25, 1997.

**Rachel Samuel,**

*Deputy Advisory Committee Management Officer.*

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