



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

September 1, 2006

Ms. Danielle Brian
Executive Director
Project on Government Oversight
666 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Brian:

Thank you for your August 15, 2006, letter regarding the Department of Energy (DOE) proposal for forming a new organization, the Office of Health, Safety and Security. We appreciate your openness to the new organizational approach. We believe that timely actions are needed to accelerate change to our safety culture and that the Department's approach can and will result in the needed improvements. Correspondingly, on August 30, 2006, the Secretary announced his decision to establish the Office of Health, Safety and Security (HSS) and assigned me to lead the new organization and serve as the Chief Health, Safety, and Security Officer for DOE.

We have also carefully considered your comments about safety expertise at DOE site office, level of access of the new organization to senior DOE management, and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB). In all of these areas, we plan to strengthen our approaches to safety and security management, as briefly summarized below.

We plan to work to enhance safety expertise across DOE line management organizations, with particular emphasis on DOE site offices, in several ways. As one step, the National Training Center, which will be a part of HSS, will increase its focus on training and professional development for DOE staff with safety oversight responsibilities. We will also increase the Headquarters focus on providing technical assistance and support to DOE line management to help them address safety issues. We will also be closely monitoring the effectiveness of line management initiatives, such as the National Nuclear Security Administration pilot programs, to objectively evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, we intend to reinvigorate the DOE Accident Investigation Program to ensure that the DOE evaluates the root cause of all accidents in an effort to reduce future occurrences.

Protection of our workers and the public from hazards associated with Department operations is the Secretary's number one concern. As has been the case for the Office of Security and Safety Performance Assurance, the new HSS office will have unencumbered access to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary on significant issues.

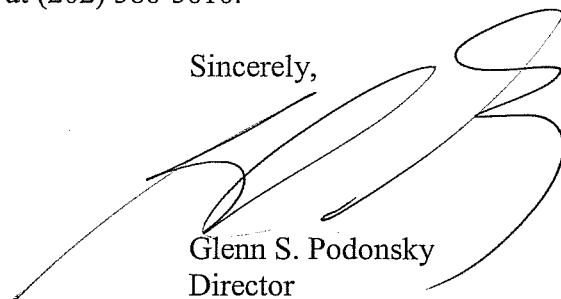


Lastly, the new organization is not intended to undermine the DNFSB in any way. To the contrary, HSS intends to continue to work with the DNFSB on safety issues at applicable sites. We also intend to examine DNFSB recommendations for their applicability to other sites to ensure that similar types of facilities implement levels of safety management and oversight. The HSS organization will include the enforcement functions in all aspects of safety and security. We plan on building on the past efforts of the Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement, which had authority only in the area of nuclear safety. In the new organization, the Office of Enforcement will have an expanded role of enforcement in the areas of security and worker safety and health, which are now covered by enforceable regulations/rules. Finally, the independent oversight organization will continue to be independent and free of responsibilities for policy and line management; we expect that the independent oversight reports will receive an even higher degree of attention and result in more positive changes within the integrated HSS organization.

In summary, we believe that the new HSS organization and your organization share many common goals including enhancing the health and safety of the Department's employees and protecting the public and environment from the hazardous materials that are used at DOE sites. We look forward to working constructively with you in the future.

For further information on the proposed reorganization, please contact Jeff Pon, Chief Human Capital Officer, at (202) 586-5610.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Podonsky', written over a horizontal line.

Glenn S. Podonsky
Director
Office of Security and Safety
Performance Assurance