



**The Inspector General's Assessment of the
Most Serious Management and
Performance Challenges Facing the
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
in Fiscal Year 2026**

Contents...

<i>From the Inspector General.....</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Challenge #1: Maintaining Organizational Health and Managing Resources to Address Critical Risks</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Challenge #2: Continuing to Prioritize the DNFSB’s Focus on Technical Oversight and Reviews</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Report Fraud, Waste, or Abuse</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Comments and Suggestions.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Notice to Non-Governmental Organizations and Business Entities Specifically Mentioned in this Report</i>	<i>3</i>



Find this document on our website:
nrcoig.oversight.gov

From the Inspector General...

On behalf of the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB), it is my pleasure to present our assessment of the most significant management and performance challenges facing the DNFSB in Fiscal Year 2026.



Pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (Public Law 113-76), the Inspector General of the NRC is assigned to also serve as the DNFSB's Inspector General. The Reports Consolidation Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-531) requires the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to summarize what it considers to be the most serious management and performance challenges facing the DNFSB every year. The Act also requires the OIG to briefly assess the agency's progress in addressing those challenges.

The challenges summarized herein are not listed in order of priority, nor do they necessarily indicate problems within the agency; rather, they should be considered as areas of focus for the DNFSB's management and staff. DNFSB leaders provided their own assessment of the key challenges facing the agency in its response to the OIG's request for input in these areas. We considered their input and independently identified the following two clear, specific, and actionable challenges that require the DNFSB's continued attention:

1. Maintaining Organizational Health and Managing Resources to Address Critical Risks; and,
2. Continuing to Prioritize the DNFSB's Focus on Technical Oversight and Reviews.

By addressing these challenges, the DNFSB will strengthen its mission execution, achieve its strategic goals, and maintain a high standard of accountability for its resources. We have included in this report some of the work the DNFSB accomplished or plans to complete during Fiscal Year 2026 for each challenge.

Robert J. Feitel

Inspector General

Challenge #1: Maintaining Organizational Health and Managing Resources to Address Critical Risks

Under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, 42 U.S.C. 2286 et seq., the Board is intended to be composed of five nuclear safety experts with demonstrated competence and knowledge relevant to its independent investigative and oversight functions. However, the Board has not been fully staffed since before the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. In January 2025, former Chair Joyce Connery retired, leaving the Board with only two members and unable to meet its quorum requirements (minimum of three members). Further, the Acting Chair's term expired in October 2025, and no nominations for additional members have been formally submitted to the Senate for consideration at this time. The absence of a quorum hinders the Board's ability to exercise its full authority.

To perform mission functions, DNFSB members and the agency's technical staff rely on DNFSB corporate support services such as contract and human resources support, financial reporting, and information technology services. These services enable DNFSB staff to complete mission-critical work more efficiently and effectively. For example, information security services help the DNFSB balance information safeguards with the access needs of legitimate users. Information security services also enable the agency to address cybersecurity threats, which are constantly evolving as criminals and foreign intelligence organizations develop new methods of attack. Additionally, these services help the DNFSB identify insiders with privileged access to agency information who could maliciously or unintentionally compromise the security of DNFSB facilities and information systems. Previous OIG assessments identified opportunities for the DNFSB to improve its information system security services, as well as its contract management, network security, and other support services.

Ongoing and Completed Actions

- The DNFSB continues taking actions to fulfill its critical mission of while awaiting the appointment of additional Board members.
- The DNFSB continues to make progress addressing OIG recommendations from past Federal Information Security Modernization Act audit reports and is in the process of implementing an Enterprise Risk Management Program to examine risk strategically from the perspective of the entire organization.
- The DNFSB defined an Information Security Architecture in accordance with the Federal Enterprise Architecture Framework and incorporated it into the agency's Enterprise Architecture in December 2024.

Challenge #2: Continuing to Prioritize the DNFSB's Focus on Technical Oversight and Reviews

Complex operations critical to national defense include the assembly and disassembly of nuclear weapons, the fabrication of plutonium pits and weapon secondary assemblies, the production and recycling of tritium, nuclear criticality experiments, and experiments to characterize special nuclear materials under extreme conditions. DNFSB technical staff evaluate safety at Department of Energy (DOE) facilities, where they must analyze many unique processes and hazards.

The Board's key technical program challenges include:

- Ensuring that operations are conducted in a manner that is accountable and transparent and directing the Board's resources toward oversight of the most significant potential safety risks in the DOE's defense nuclear complex;
- Maintaining open and effective communication with the DOE that enables problem-solving through mutual understanding of safety issues that require action, as well as factors that may constrain action to address safety issues;
- Ensuring that DNFSB staff at both headquarters and DOE facilities have well-defined guidance for the oversight function; and,
- Ensuring that internal controls are fully understood and implemented.

Ongoing and Completed Actions

- The DNFSB continues its review of the Savannah River Site Tritium Emergency Preparedness Program. The DNFSB has had a long-standing focus on the emergency preparedness program at the Savannah River Site, particularly the site's response to an accident at the Tritium Facilities that posed unique and significant hazards to the workforce.
- In March 2025, the DNFSB transmitted a letter to the Secretary of Energy regarding the implementation of DOE Order 210.2, *DOE Corporate Operating Experience Program*. This order established a comprehensive operating experience program designed to ensure the identification, evaluation, and incorporation of lessons learned from internal and external issues. The Board's review identified significant gaps in the coverage of operating experience related to nuclear safety.
- Also in March 2025, the DNFSB transmitted a letter to the DOE regarding the review of three nuclear critical safety programs within the DOE complex and identified areas for improvement to enhance safety. Key findings included contractor workforce retention issues, which have impacted implementation of critical safety controls, and the need for stronger requirements and guidance to support a less-experienced contractor workforce.
- In October 2024, the DNFSB completed a review of the maintenance program at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant's Low Activity Waste Facility at the Hanford Site.

Reporting to the OIG

The OIG Hotline Program provides NRC and DNFSB employees, other government employees, licensee/utility employees, contractors, and the public with a confidential means of reporting suspicious activity concerning fraud, waste, abuse, and employee or management misconduct. Mismanagement of agency programs or danger to public health and safety may also be reported. The OIG does not attempt to identify persons who contact the Hotline anonymously.

What should be reported to the OIG?

- Contract and Procurement Irregularities
- Conflicts of Interest
- Theft and Misuse of Property
- Travel Fraud
- Misconduct
- Abuse of Authority
- Misuse of Government Credit Card
- Time and Attendance Abuse
- Misuse of IT Resources
- Program Mismanagement

How do I report to the OIG?



Call the OIG Hotline:

1-800-233-3497

TTY/TDD: 7-1-1, or

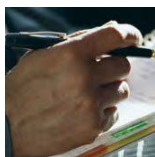
1-800-201-7165

7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (ET)

After hours, please leave a message.



Submit an [Online Form](#)



Write:

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of the Inspector General
Hotline Program
MS O12-A12
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Maryland 20852-2738

If you wish to provide comments on this report or suggestions for future reports, please email the OIG at audit.comments@nrc.gov.

Notice to Non-Governmental Organizations and Business Entities Specifically Mentioned in this Report

Section 5274 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, amended the Inspector General Act of 1978 to require OIGs to notify certain entities of OIG reports. In particular, section 5274 requires that, if an OIG specifically identifies any non-governmental organization (NGO) or business entity (BE) in an audit or other non-investigative report, the OIG must notify the NGO or BE that it has 30 days from the date of the report's publication to review the report and, if it chooses, submit a written response that clarifies or provides additional context for each instance within the report in which the NGO or BE is specifically identified.

If you are an NGO or BE that has been specifically identified in this report and you believe you have not been otherwise notified of the report's availability, please be aware that under section 5274 such an NGO or BE may provide a written response to this report no later than 30 days from the report's publication date. Any response you provide will be appended to the published report as it appears on our public website, assuming your response is within the scope of section 5274. Please note, however, that the OIG may decline to append to the report any response, or portion of a response, that goes beyond the scope of the response provided for by section 5274. Additionally, the OIG will review each response to determine whether it should be redacted in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and policies before we post the response to our public website. Please send any response via email using this [link](#). Questions regarding the opportunity to respond should also be directed to this same address.