

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hearing on “DOE Management and Oversight of Its Nuclear Weapons Complex: Lessons  
of the Y-12 Security Failure”  
March 13 2013**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Today’s hearing represents another important step in this committee’s ongoing oversight to ensure the Department of Energy’s management of the nuclear security enterprise can successfully protect taxpayer dollars, ensure public health and worker safety, and safeguard our national security assets.

We know from both our past work, as well as from the recent and very troubling security failures at Y-12, that management reform is necessary to ensure safe and secure operations. The challenge has been learning the right lessons from past failures and then successfully implementing the right fixes.

Time and again over the past 14 years, we have witnessed dramatic failures in safety and security, as well as taxpayer waste, across the nuclear complex. Despite this poor track record, in 2009 DOE proposed increased autonomy and less oversight as the appropriate corrective actions.

We know, though, from past experience and the Y-12 breach that strong and consistent federal management, bolstered by truly independent oversight, is necessary. DOE leadership must be clear that safety and security come first.

Safety and performance go hand-in-hand. This is the lesson we’ve learned from the civilian nuclear industry. As safety improves, so does performance. Absent an embedded safety culture, there is erosion of safety practices, leading to outages, delays, and other operational impacts. The same is true for security.

The Y-12 security breach demonstrated not only a failure at the site, but also a failure of DOE and NNSA management. We can trace some of this failure to the initiatives launched by DOE leadership three and four years ago to rely more on contractor self-assessments and to define success as productivity gains. Secretary Chu himself wanted DOE to be viewed as a “partner and asset” for the contractors, sending a signal that oversight of these contractors would not be a priority.

Members on this committee warned the Secretary in 2010 that such initiatives – however well-intentioned – were misinterpreting the lessons of the past and could backfire. DOE’s track record speaks for itself.

As the committee with oversight responsibility for DOE, we must ensure that current and future DOE leadership learn the right lessons. This will start today, when DOE/NNSA explains that it has serious plans for fixing and sustaining improvements in safety and security oversight.

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