

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 27, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending January 27, 2017

Area G–Safety Basis: Last Friday, LANL submitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval a safety basis strategy and implementation plan for resolution of three outstanding Potential Inadequacies of the Safety Analysis for material-at-risk (MAR) inventory discrepancies in Area G (see 5/20/16 weekly). LANL’s strategy includes the need for the NNSA Field Office to approve the related Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation (ESS) submitted in May 2016. Following approval, Area G operators will implement stricter MAR limits and will relocate approximately 500 waste containers to meet array spacing requirements for the aircraft crash analysis for all of Area G. LANL indicates that a revised safety basis incorporating the ESS will be submitted in April 2017 to fully resolve the issues.

On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office Manager approved LANL’s request for Area G to receive and store waste drums related to inappropriately remediated nitrate salt (RNS) waste treatment activities (see 12/2/16 weekly). In the approval letter, the NNSA Field Office Manager notes that care was taken to ensure this effort does not conflict with the pending safety basis approvals for MAR discrepancy issues discussed above.

Unremediated Nitrate Salt (UNS) Waste–Safety Basis Strategy: Also last Friday, LANL submitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval a treatment plan and safety basis strategy for the 29 UNS waste containers currently stored in Area G. LANL’s proposed treatment activities include non-destructive assay and physical inspection of the UNS containers in Area G, transport from Area G to the Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF), and final treatment at WCRRF to eliminate the waste’s ignitability characteristics. LANL’s proposed safety basis strategy includes the need to conduct a process hazard analysis on the activities in Area G to determine if safety basis changes will be necessary, and the submittal of a temporary modification to the WCRRF safety basis to support treatment activities. The safety basis strategy indicates that all necessary safety basis changes will be submitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval by April 2017. Of note, LANL’s submittal indicates that discussions with the NNSA and EM Field Offices concluded treatment of RNS and UNS wastes remain the top risk reduction priorities at Area G and WCRRF.

Emergency Management–Federal Oversight: On Monday, the NNSA Field Office published a fiscal year 2016 self-assessment of its emergency management program. The assessment was performed by the NNSA Field Office emergency management program manager and included the following subjects in its scope: (1) hazards surveys and hazards assessments, (2) program administration, (3) training, drills and exercises, (4) readiness assurance, (5) emergency response, and (6) offsite interfaces. The assessment report identifies three findings including: (1) oversight of the wildland fire management plan is inadequate, (2) the NNSA Field Office is not approving and submitting hazards surveys, emergency planning hazards analyses, nor emergency planning zones in a timely manner, and (3) mutual aid agreements between the NNSA Field Office and tribal authorities pertaining to emergency response do not exist. The emergency management program manager has entered the identified findings and observations in the NNSA Field Office issues management system for resolution.