

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 2, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending June 2, 2017

DNFSB Staff Activity: On Wednesday, B.K. Caleca, M.W. Dunlevy, P.J. Foster, P.J. Migliorini, and J. Parham conducted a teleconference with Transuranic Waste Facility project personnel to discuss the results of their review of the commercial grade dedication process for the Seismic Power Cutoff System.

Area G–Emergency Management: On Wednesday, Area G personnel conducted their annual emergency exercise. This year’s scenario involved the collision of a truck with a forklift resulting in four breached transuranic waste drums and two injured workers. Participants included Area G personnel, the LANL Emergency Management and Response organizations, and the Los Alamos County Fire Department. Evaluators will hold their critique next Monday.

Emergency Management: On Wednesday, two post-doctoral researchers at the TA-48 Radiochemistry facility observed flames from the depleted uranium metal turnings that they were cleaning with nitric acid in a fume hood. The researchers choose not to fight the fire, closed the hood sash, pulled the fire alarm, and contacted 911. The Los Alamos County Fire Department, LANL emergency management, and the LANL hazardous materials team responded. No radioactive contamination, injuries, or damage beyond the containment tray in the fume hood occurred. Facility, program, and emergency response personnel held a fact-finding on Thursday to discuss the response. Of relevance to the broader emergency management program at the laboratory, several individuals indicated that they did not receive a mass notification message to stay clear of TA-48 because the notification is based on office location and some TA-48 users have their offices in other locations. No corrective action was assigned for this point. Facility personnel discussed challenges using their accountability process during the lunch hour and proposed to review the process and conduct a future accountability drill. Management also concluded that the fire did not meet Department of Energy reporting criteria for a fire and instead reported the event as a management concern.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office Manager conditionally approved a temporary modification to the safety basis associated with the mobile loading of transuranic waste containers. This new activity provides the capability for Plutonium Facility personnel to directly load transuranic waste containers for offsite shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant—similar to the RANT Shipping Facility. The condition of approval prohibits assembly of payloads that include pipe overpack containers until such time that the accidents involving these containers are re-evaluated using the results of the ongoing testing efforts. The approval letter also stipulated that the temporary modification expires in two years and directs LANL to include the contents of the temporary modification in the next annual update of the safety basis.

Inappropriately Remediated Nitrate Salt (RNS) Waste–Treatment Activities: Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility workers successfully treated two RNS drums. On Thursday, they received two additional RNS drums and returned three daughter transuranic waste drums to Area G.