

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 7, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending July 7, 2017

Federal Oversight: This week, the NNSA Field Office initiated a special assessment team to oversee and evaluate LANL's causal analysis and corrective actions associated with the recent incidents involving the inappropriate air cargo shipping of plutonium. The team will also perform a meta-analysis of other recent incidents with similar contributing causes and evaluate the plans to resume offsite shipment of hazardous and radioactive cargos.

Last Friday, the EM Field Office Manager assumed authority for safety basis approval and startup authorization for work associated with Area G and the Nuclear Environmental Sites.

Plutonium Facility–Seismic Safety: On Wednesday, NNSA Field Office and LANL personnel briefed the NNSA Associate Administrator for Safety, Infrastructure, and Operations, on the status of plans to procure a nonlinear dynamic analysis of the facility structure and a separate, but related effort, to test the performance of column capitals. The Associate Administrator approved moving forward with both procurements. The preliminary high-level schedule indicates that completion of both efforts will necessitate approximately two years.

Area G–Safety Basis: Last Friday, LANL submitted to the EM Field Office for review, a proposed safety basis strategy to support transuranic waste shipments from other LANL facilities to Area G. The strategy identifies the need to cancel the operating restrictions on transuranic waste receipt put in place following an inadequacy in the safety analysis regarding material-at-risk inventory discrepancies (see 5/20/16 weekly), as well as a need to increase allowable material-at-risk limits. The LANL strategy proposes to first revise the evaluation of the safety of the situation put in place for the material at-risk-discrepancies to allow transuranic waste receipt, and then to revise the current safety basis to increase material-at-risk limits. LANL notes in the strategy that these changes are necessary to support mission needs, in particular to alleviate waste storage issues at the Plutonium Facility.

Inappropriately Remediated Nitrate Salt (RNS) Waste–Treatment Activities: Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF) workers successfully treated the 12th RNS drum. They also received two additional RNS containers from Area G. Last week, Area G personnel denested four containers of unremediated nitrate salts (UNS) to evaluate drum integrity. They encountered drum degradation and determined that the poly drum liners will likely need to be pulled and placed into new drums prior to shipment to the WCRRF.

Last Friday, LANL management informed the EM Field Office that they would not meet the current contractual milestones for processing of RNS and the UNS wastes of June 30 and September 30, 2017, respectively. Their current working schedule, which was adjusted using efficiency data from the completed portion of the campaign, now projects respective completions of December 22, 2017, and April 10, 2018. WCRRF management is actively engaging workers for feedback on additional efficiency opportunities.