

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 26, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending October 26, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: Staff members P. Migliorini, A. Powers, R. Tontodonato, and M. Wright were on site to review the safety basis of the Plutonium Facility. They also walked-down the mobile loading pad at Area G, as part of an ongoing review of the adequacy of the control set for that activity.

Transuranic Waste Facility: On Wednesday, the NNSA Field Office issued a Safety Evaluation Report approving the contractor's safety basis revision to address upgrading the fire suppression system to safety-significant, chemical compatibility controls, and new filters for pipe overpack containers (see 8/17/2018 report). The Safety Evaluation Report includes one condition of approval that directs the contractor to revise certain hazard analysis events to specifically credit the fire suppression system for risk reduction.

Emergency Management: On Wednesday, Emergency Operations Center personnel conducted their quarterly drill with simulated field play. The scenario involved a vehicle accident in the Transuranic Waste Facility resulting in a pool fire potentially impacting the sixteen waste drums on the vehicle. The scenario used actual meteorological conditions, which created the challenge of measuring alpha contamination in the rain. Many members of the incoming Triad management team observed the drill.

Transuranic Waste Management: On Monday, Plutonium Facility personnel were able to mobile load 16 containers of sealed sources into two shipping containers for disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, completing the attempt that started last week. They had hoped to load a third shipping container, but were prevented by poor weather conditions on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Confinement Vessel Disposition Project: Last Thursday, the safety-significant ventilation system for the enclosure unexpectedly shut down near the end of a job. There were no continuous air monitor alarms. Engineering personnel responded and were unable to determine the cause of the ventilation failure. They were able to restart one fan through a system modification; however, the work was not performed as part of an approved work package. They continued troubleshooting this week, but have not restored the system operability. As such, the facility remains in the limiting condition for operations with the material-at-risk in the enclosure in a stable configuration.

Nuclear Criticality Safety: Last week, the division leader issued their performance metrics summary for fiscal year 2018. Overall, the metrics indicate a rating of needs improvement; however, the report indicates a number of encouraging developments. The group exceeded their field time targets in each of the quarters and completed annual fissionable material operations reviews coming due each month at a rate of 97 % or better. During the year, the group also reduced the number of infractions open longer than 12 months from 9 to 1 and removed 36 operations from the compliance backlog. Staffing continues to improve with an increase during the year of 2 each for in-training and qualified analysts for a total of 25 direct employees supported by an additional 8 sub-contractors. The metrics indicate that the primary areas for improvement are program implementation and process deviations.