

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 11, 2019

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director  
**FROM:** J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors  
**SUBJECT:** Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending January 11, 2019

**Area G:** On Tuesday, the EM Field Office approved a one-time variance to the technical safety requirements for Area G in order to allow snow removal equipment into the locations with inoperable safety-class vehicle barriers (see 11/16/2018 report). The variance required N3B to keep all waste storage areas in the impacted areas in warm standby mode and have a spotter in contact with the snow removal equipment at all times. On Wednesday, a worker returned into the vehicle restricted area with snow removal equipment without a spotter in order to clean up another patch of snow. This was observed by the shift operations manager who promptly paused work. N3B management determined this constituted a violation of the technical safety requirements. They also decided to conduct an apparent causal analysis on this and a number of recent similar events.

On Monday, N3B personnel observed that two waste storage domes were damaged by recent snow accumulation. The snow load resulted in bent and broken structural cross members, bent cross member brackets, and bent conduit. Existing tears in the dome fabric also expanded allowing snow to enter the waste domes. The dome structures do not have a credited safety function. The safety basis treats the domes as light construction so impacts from lightweight falling structural members on waste drums are not considered. However, there are heavier black steel fire suppression pipes supported by the affected dome structures.

**Federal Oversight:** This week, NNSA and EM released the 2018 performance evaluation reports for their contractors. NNSA noted the following relevant points for their fiscal year 2018 contractor:

- LANS completed planned improvements to conduct of operation in the Plutonium Facility, but progress was inconsistent to improve construction and maintenance activities.
- LANS was not fully effective in supporting the transition of the N3B.
- Poor housekeeping and operational practices in the Plutonium Facility exacerbated material control and accountability issues.
- The quality of nuclear criticality safety evaluations had improved, but inconsistent limit sets were creating implementation challenges.
- LANS worked collaboratively with the NNSA Field Office to enhance tracking and oversight of safety basis documents and coming nearer to meeting emergency management requirements.

EM noted strengths for N3B including safety culture, readiness of mobile loading operations, and the operational standup of Area G. They noted relevant areas for improvement including data and quality programs, issues management, and timely revision of blue sheeted procedures.

**Accident Investigation:** On Monday, NNSA and Triad personnel commenced a joint investigation of an accident that severely injured a sub-contracted construction worker in a non-nuclear activity on December 19, 2018.