

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 15, 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 February 15, 2019

Plutonium Facility–Transuranic Waste Management: On Saturday, workers were replacing filters on the outer drums of pipe overpack containers (POC) with the new filters needed to support a damage ratio of zero for postulated fire scenarios (see 1/25/2019 report). The work crew inadvertently removed the filter from a 7A drum on the outdoor waste pad that did not contain a POC, but instead contained bagged waste. Note that 7A drums are used as the outer container on POCs making them visually indistinguishable. There was no contamination spread. Facility management paused this activity pending revision of the procedure to reduce the potential for errors.

RANT Shipping Facility–Readiness: On Monday, the contractor readiness assessment team completed their review and briefed the results to facility management. The team identified one pre-start and one post-start finding. The pre-start finding was that two doors were not configured in accordance with life safety code and could be locked from the outside. The post-start finding was to complete an updated industrial hygiene assessment as one has not been performed in more than five years. The team made positive observations on the thoroughness of the management self-assessment and the coordination between different organizations working at RANT. The pre-start finding was corrected before the end of the week and the federal readiness assessment will start next week.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: On Tuesday, the NNSA Field Office issued a safety evaluation report unconditionally approving the contractor’s annual update to the Plutonium Facility’s safety basis (see 8/17/2018 report). This particular update addresses long-standing conditions of approval, many of which originated in 2008, and includes efforts to modernize the hazard analysis and consolidate multiple safety basis documents. The field office requested an implementation plan for concurrence within two weeks.

Area G–Safety Basis: On Monday, N3B safety basis personnel completed their New Information evaluation regarding the protection of material-at-risk (MAR) assumptions for mobile loading operations (see 2/1/2019 report). They concluded that there was no potential inadequacy in the safety analysis and that MAR limits for non-combustible waste types during mobile loading do not need to be protected in the Technical Safety Requirements. Their justification was that conservatism in the development of the composite source term used for site-wide accidents exceed the uncertainties associated with the unprotected distribution of non-combustible wastes during mobile loading.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) Building–Nuclear Criticality Safety: On Tuesday, workers opened a legacy item retrieved from the vault and encountered a liquid when they were expecting a solid compound based on the label information. They had opened the item in a location where liquids were prohibited by the criticality safety posting. Subsequent to discussion with their supervisor, they moved the item to another location in the facility for non-destructive assay. At the fact-finding, NNSA Field Office personnel questioned why the workers and their supervisor did not respond in accordance with the procedure for process deviations and waited approximately five hours before notifying the operations center. CMR management plans to reinforce expectations for response to process deviations and conduct an extent-of-condition review to strengthen planning for future legacy item processing activities.