

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 27, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plae and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending September 27, 2019

DNFSB Staff Activity: D.J. Brown and M.W. Dunlevy observed a peer review workshop on the disposition options for the inappropriately remediated nitrate salt wastes currently stored at the Waste Control Specialists facility. Dunlevy also completed walk-downs focused on transuranic waste management at Area G, the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building, and the Plutonium Facility.

Management: Senior federal and contractor officials from other NNSA sites conducted a three day peer review of the governance system. The team received briefings, observed routine mission assurance interactions, and held round table discussions with personnel involved in mission assurance. Overall, they found that the vector is positive for all of the reviewed elements. They also identified a number of notable practices and feedback for consideration concerning Triad, the NNSA Field Office, and NNSA Headquarters.

Emergency Management: On Wednesday, Triad conducted their annual emergency exercise. This year's scenario involved a dropped payload of transuranic waste at the RANT Shipping Facility and a near concurrent wildland fire at TA-49. Conduct of the exercise was challenged by the need for assets to respond to several real-world emergencies including a spill of an unknown liquid, a truck fire, and the evacuation of the Emergency Operations Center due to high carbon dioxide levels. Triad and NNSA personnel believe they were able to adequately complete the objectives of the exercise despite these interruptions and are evaluating performance.

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: Last weekend, Plutonium Facility personnel successfully executed an outage of the fire suppression system to complete a number of maintenance activities. Notably, they completed the field work associated with eliminating the seismic interaction issues where insufficiently qualified ventilation handling equipment was located above sprinkler piping. This action resolves one of the issues identified in the Board's letter dated May 12, 2016. Work is ongoing to analyze additional upgrades that may be required to achieve seismic performance category 3 for the fire protection system.

Plutonium Facility–Work Control: On Monday, a craft worker inadvertently cut a line on the potentially pressurized side of a locked out valve. The system was fortunately unpressurized and there were no injuries. The worker who performed the cut did not have a personal lock in place. Facility management noted that while this specific event had no consequences, it bore similarities to other events and could easily have led to more significant problems. Facility construction management instituted a pause on lock out/tag out activities. Triad will perform a formal causal analysis and will evaluate corrective actions from previous events for effectiveness.

Plutonium Facility–Transuranic Waste Management: On Wednesday, management lifted the pause on transuranic waste drum handling activities following training of personnel on techniques and equipment for safe handling of drums.