

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 21, 2020

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 21, 2020

Federal Oversight: On Wednesday, the EM Field Office issued their first staffing plan for Facility Representatives. They identified the need for four Facility Representatives and an additional supervisor. They currently have one newly hired individual undergoing qualification and two technical support contractors (see 11/29/2019 report). The most recent staffing plan for the NNSA Field Office identifies the need for a 15 member Facility Representative team with six vacancies. Many of NNSA's Facility Representatives are undergoing qualification resulting in key facilities that lack fully qualified coverage. For example, the Plutonium Facility has had only approximately four months where a fully qualified Facility Representative was present since November 2018.

Radiological Laboratory Utility Office Building: Last Friday, the NNSA Field Office sent a letter to Triad concerning deficiencies in the fire barriers, fire penetration seals, fire doors, and fire sprinkler restraints in the building. They noted that Triad identified the initial deficiencies as impairments on September 9, 2019, and that the full extent of condition remains unknown without an agreed upon schedule for completion. The field office directed Triad to: (1) submit an extent of condition report for all fire deficiencies by February 28, 2020; (2) submit for concurrence a prioritized strategy for dispositioning the deficiencies by March 20, 2020; and (3) provide a justification for why the building is safe to operate considering all fire deficiencies and the potential for similar construction deficiencies in other functional areas by March 20, 2020.

Plutonium Facility–Work Planning and Control: Last Wednesday, during performance of the weekly surveillance on the safety class firewater pumps, operations personnel observed that the level of fuel in the diesel day tank failed to meet the specified minimum. They took appropriate actions and restored the system. At the fact-finding conducted this Wednesday, participants determined that the likely cause of the condition was that a fuel sample had been taken the previous week as part of enhanced monitoring of the pumps (see 1/31/2020 report). The work authorizing document used to perform the sampling was a “Quick Fix” and did not provide important work steps such as replacing the volume of sampled fuel. Fact-finding participants determined that other work documents are available to support future sampling; however, they did not explore how the work control process allowed a “Quick Fix” to be used on safety class equipment, which is not authorized.

Emergency Management: On Wednesday Triad and N3B personnel conducted an emergency exercise. A five member team from DOE's Office of Enterprise Assessments was on site to evaluate the exercise. The scenario occurred in Area G and involved a truck hauling transuranic waste containers that crashed into a transuranic waste storage dome resulting in a pool fire. Triad personnel completed the formal critique and are evaluating exercise performance. During the critique, participants noted that miscommunications resulted in the Emergency Operations Center issuing inappropriate protective actions at Area G. A separate issue resulted in incorrect protective action recommendations for offsite communities.

Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC): Last Friday, Triad personnel took operational control from N3B of the sheds within Area G that house the FTWCs. Control will revert back to N3B, once the FTWCs are vented and moved to the Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility.