

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 17, 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 April 17, 2020

COVID-19 Impacts: Staffing levels and work activities remain similar to last week. Developments this week include:

- Two Triad affiliated workers tested positive. They are associated with construction projects that have continued as part of reduced operations. The laboratory total is now four, including two N3B affiliated workers that tested positive earlier this month.
- In anticipation of increasing programmatic operations in the coming weeks, Plutonium Facility management conducted training on COVID-19 related safe work practices. Additionally, they began performing procedure reviews to determine whether processes can be performed while maintaining six feet of standoff between work crew members. They plan to implement additional mitigation measures for those actions that cannot meet this requirement.
- Triad personnel continued transuranic waste characterization and movement activities. They completed two shipments of waste from the Plutonium Facility to the Transuranic Waste Facility.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: Late last month, Triad safety basis personnel noted that material-at-risk (MAR) tracking software applied a damage ratio of less than unity for credited containers that are nested within non-credited containers. They conservatively concluded that the actual damage ratio of a nested container configuration is unanalyzed. Analysts recalculated the MAR in the basement without applying a damage ratio for nested configurations and determined that they are approaching the limit. Last Friday, Triad submitted a safety basis change to the NNSA Field Office requesting a two-fold increase in the limit for basement waste MAR. Their technical justification for this increase states that doubling the basement MAR increases the mitigated consequences for the bounding accident from 3.0 to 3.3 rem to the public. Longer term, Triad plans to evaluate an appropriate net damage ratio for nested containers.

Federal Oversight: On Wednesday, NNSA Field Office management conducted a telephonic oral board for an emergency management specialist. The candidate passed the examination, which was executed well under the remote-work conditions. The NNSA Field Office is currently staffed with two emergency management specialists.

Continuous Improvement: Since November 2018, Plutonium Facility management has requested 50 causal analyses, including 42 during the first twelve months of operation, for events that procedures would not have required performance of a causal analysis. For comparison, the predecessor contractor requested eight non-mandatory analyses during their last year of operation. To enable this analysis workload, Plutonium Facility management increased the number of its causal analysts from one to five. They recently completed two reviews of the causal program. The first review initiated a periodic examination for trends and common causes, but found there was not yet sufficient data to draw defensible conclusions. The second review examined eight completed causal reports and found that only about 55 percent of the recommendations were being tracked to closure in the issues management system. Plutonium Facility management is developing an issues management improvement plan to strengthen several processes, including better integration of the causal analysis process with the issues management system. The resident inspectors note that the effectiveness of the program could be strengthened by formalizing some existing practices into a procedure covering the lifecycle of the causal process.