

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 22, 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 May 22, 2020

COVID-19 Impacts: The nuclear facilities continue with routine entry into their normal operation modes as defined in their safety bases to support programmatic work. Triad implemented new controls for onsite work including mandatory use of face coverings in common areas and random testing of priority worker populations (e.g., first responders, mission essential staff, and positions that require high social contact). Triad personnel continued transuranic waste characterization and movement activities. They completed two shipments from the RANT Shipping Facility to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

Plutonium Facility–Operations: Last week, facility personnel opened a shipping cask containing plutonium heat source material received from the Idaho National Laboratory in 2016. On Wednesday, facility personnel noted that the SAVY container, which was the credited barrier in the configuration, from the cask contained more units than allowed by an associated specific administrative control that protects the thermal limit for the SAVY. Accordingly, facility management declared a violation of the Technical Safety Requirements. At the fact-finding, involved personnel noted that there were gaps between the implementation matrix for the approved safety basis and the procedures used to perform this activity consistent with the applicable specific administrative control (see 12/20/2019 report). Triad personnel plan to perform a formal causal analysis on this event and evaluate the procedures used for this activity. The heat source material has been introduced into a glovebox and no longer relies on its container.

The Resident Inspectors walked down the facility on Thursday. Observations include:

- Workers were actively reducing the number of process residue containers that have been accumulating in the floor storage area of a processing room (see 6/28/2019 report). There are now about 90 containers in the location and the workers have implemented a tracking grid to facilitate easier management.
- The majority of rooms have occupancy limits posted at entrances in a standardized location used to alert workers for room-specific conditions. As a best practice, one room with a high work tempo had a small whiteboard on the door to track occupants. Notably, facility management established occupancy limits that accommodate federal oversight personnel.
- Workers inside the facility were generally adhering to COVID-19 controls and expressed confidence in those controls.
- Waste management personnel relocated the trailer loaded with combustibles further away from transuranic waste drums. Safety basis personnel continue to determine whether the previous location represents a potential inadequacy of the safety analysis.
- Senior Weapons Production managers were performing a facility walkdown.

Radiological Laboratory Utility Office Building: Last week, the NNSA Field Office provided minor adjustments, but overall concurred with Triad's strategy for addressing the fire protection deficiencies in the building (see 3/27/2020 report).