

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 5, 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 June 5, 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. Current activities at the Plutonium Facility include casting, electrorefining, heat source plutonium processing, and elimination of production residues. Triad personnel also continued transuranic waste characterization, movement, and shipping activities with another two shipments completed from the RANT Shipping Facility. These shipments consisted of standard waste boxes with high fissile gram equivalent drums. This is the first shipment of standard waste boxes from the RANT Shipping Facility since its restart in 2019.

Plutonium Facility–Operations: Triad management recently initiated a formal second work shift focused primarily on equipment upgrades supporting pit manufacturing and completion of radiological control tasks. The second shift alleviates some COVID-19 challenges with co-located programmatic and installation work during the day shift. The NNSA Field Office has out-year plans for increased field staff to accommodate shift work and is developing a strategy for oversight in the interim.

Plutonium Facility–Emergency Management: Last Tuesday, workers bumped a glovebox thermal detector while erecting scaffolding resulting in a fire alarm and emergency response. On Monday, facility personnel conducted a fact-finding on this event. This was the third fire response resulting from inadvertent insults to fire protection equipment in 2020. Given the recurrence, fact-finding personnel determined the need to further assess construction type activities near fire devices. They also discussed discrepancies in the institutional reporting of the event that reflected a response to an adjacent administrative building rather than the nuclear facility.

Area G–Contractor Assurance: Last month, N3B closed out its corrective action associated with the technical safety requirement violation for multiple failures to complete vegetation inspections and cutbacks during wildland fire season, as well as maintain the records (see 12/20/2019 report). N3B management screened the issue as low significance in accordance with the DOE occurrence reporting system criteria, which then translated into a low significance categorization in the N3B issues management process. Of note, the N3B process does not preclude management from assigning a higher significance level and even suggests a moderate designation for compliance issues that impact safety. The benefits of a moderate or high significance level include additional rigor such as detailed causal analysis, management review board screenings, and effectiveness evaluations. In this case, as a low significance issue, the N3B responsible manager determined the corrective action to be a revision to the associated procedure. On Tuesday, the resident inspectors observed in-progress shrubbery mitigation and an overall improvement to the state of vegetation control compared to last month.

Federal Oversight: Two weeks ago, the NNSA Field Office issued its self-assessment of their Nuclear Maintenance Management Program. The report included one finding that field office personnel had not performed a comprehensive assessment of the contractor's maintenance management programs within the three year frequency in accordance with DOE Order 413.1B, *Maintenance Management Program for DOE Nuclear Facilities*. This issue was also contained in the 2017 biennial review by the Chief of Defense Nuclear Safety. Field office personnel have an oversight plan in place to complete the required assessment and resolve this issue.