

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 4, 2020

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Daniel B. Bullen, Ph.D., P.E., Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) Report for November 2020

COVID-19 Response: While confirmed cases of COVID-19 continued to rise in the counties surrounding SNL during November 2020, the status of SNL remained unchanged. The Sandia Field Office (SFO) and National Technology and Engineering Solutions of Sandia, LLC (NTESS) continued to operate under Phase 2 of their return-to-site plans, which encourages maximum telework for SFO and NTESS staff members.

First Quarter Fiscal Year 2021 Startup Notification Report (SNR) Approval: On November 2, 2020, the SFO approved the First Quarter Fiscal Year 2021 SNR submitted by NTESS on October 8, 2020. The SNR noted three activities planned for the Technical Area V (TA-V) nuclear facilities in the next twelve months and two activities after twelve months, each of which will require readiness reviews. SFO agreed with the readiness level determinations for all proposed activities, which include in-service fuel inspection at the Annular Core Research Reactor Facility (ACRRF); fielding of Class III Experiments with fissionable materials at the ACRRF; reactor operations to support neutron radiography at the ACRRF; and transient rod withdrawal operations. SFO is the Startup Authorization Authority for these activities.

Base Support Agreement (BSA) Emergency Management Transition: On November 5, 2020, Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) approved and signed the BSA between KAFB and the Department of Energy. The BSA includes a number of changes that impact the SNL Emergency Management Program. Kirtland Fire and Emergency Services (KFES) assumed the SNL incident command function on November 12, 2020. SNL agency representatives will continue to respond to incidents to support KFES and to coordinate SNL responses. As part of the transition to the BSA, SNL Emergency Management personnel met with KFES and SNL Medical personnel to evaluate KFES Emergency Medical Technician and Paramedic staffing levels for the medical back-up role. KFES will assume full responsibilities for back-up medical on December 1, 2020. In addition, KFES will assume full responsibility for technical rescue capabilities on December 1, 2020. KFES is currently assessing their HAZMAT capabilities and will determine by January 7, 2021, if they are ready to assume full responsibility for HAZMAT responses as scheduled on January 21, 2021.

ACRRF In-Service Fuel Element Inspection: During November, ACRRF staff continued preparations for the readiness assessment activities associated with the start-up of in-service fuel element inspection. The inspection activities include visual examination, dimensional measurements, mass measurements, and ultrasonic testing. NTESS delayed the Management Self-Assessment (MSA) for this start-up activity until early December, with the Contractor Readiness Assessment scheduled for February 2021 and the Federal Readiness Assessment scheduled for April 2021.

Auxiliary Hot Cell Facility (AHCF) Spare Fuel Inspection and Qualification: AHCF staff continued spare fuel inspection and qualification during November. AHCF staff unpacked three wooden crates containing a total of 30 spare fuel elements for the qualification inspections. The inspection activities include visual examination, dimensional measurements, mass measurements, and helium leak detection. Upon completion of inspection activities, AHCF staff store the spare fuel elements in 5-element arrays in metal drums.