

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 2, 2022

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Erin A. McCullough, Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Report for August 2022

DNFSB Staff Activity. The INL Flammable Gas Hazards Review Team finished its analytical work and are preparing an advisory staff report. Three staff members observed the Department of Energy (DOE) appraisal of readiness activities at the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU) and reviewed supporting documentation. The cognizant engineer and a staff conduct of operations expert visited the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project facilities, IWTU, and the New Waste Calcining Facility (NWCF). DOE Idaho Operations Office (DOE-ID) personnel edited the Complex-wide Review on DOE Field Office Review and Approval of DSAs staff summary.

COVID-19 Update. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID Data Tracker shows that all counties near INL facilities still have “Low” COVID-19 Community Levels.

IWTU Readiness Assessments. From August 15-18, 2022, a Board’s staff team observed DOE Readiness Assessment personnel (RA Team) in their second part of appraising the Idaho Environmental Coalition, LLC (IEC), management and operators as they performed drills, evolutions, and personnel interviews to demonstrate their ability to safely operate the IWTU as a radiological facility. This is the last assessment required prior to DOE authorizing startup of the facility and follows a previous staff observation of a Contractor Readiness Assessment and the first part of the DOE Readiness Assessment in July 2022. The Board’s staff team observed multiple instances in which radiological control technicians appeared sensitive to their inexperience with radiological work, and the RA Team noted that personnel demonstrated weakness during the radiological personal protective equipment doffing demonstration. Communications with DOE-ID personnel showed their awareness and commitment to correcting the issues identified by the readiness assessment teams to ensure that the IWTU is ready for radioactive waste processing, consistent with the DOE Order 425.1D requirements. The Board’s staff team received outbrief notes for both readiness assessments and withholds judgement about IWTU’s readiness until it reviews the forthcoming DOE Readiness Assessment Report.

Update on the NWCF In-cell Crane. The Board’s INL reports for January and February 2022 explained how a collision between a shield door and the in-cell crane at the NWCF on January 13, 2022, substantially damaged the crane, rendering it out-of-service. IEC personnel placed a purchase order for a new crane in May 2022, which will take at least six months to obtain. IEC engineering developed an alternative approach in which the Crane Maintenance Area crane is used to perform work within the valve cubicles, removing the overhead concrete shield plugs as needed. With essential work in the valve cubicle completed, the out-of-service crane is no longer a single point-of-failure for forthcoming radiological operations at IWTU.

Active Wildfires. Forest Service databases indicate that Idaho has the most active wildfires in the United States. On August 19, 2022, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 10 authorized a Fire Management Assistance Grant for areas near Boise. The Idaho Department of Lands’ Idaho Fire Map shows that the small wildfires closest to INL are controlled and contained.