

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 2, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Boussouf and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending September 2, 2022

DNFSB Staff Activity: M. Bradisse and M. Dunlevy were on site this week. They met with Environmental Management Field Office and N3B personnel to prepare for the Board's planned public hearing in November. They provided resident inspector augmentation including observations of mobile loading of transuranic waste at Technical Area 55, metal production activities in the plutonium facility, mockup practice for corrugated metal pipe size reduction at Area G, and drill and drain activities at Area G. A headquarters staff team held a follow-up call with Triad and NNSA Field Office personnel to complete the discussion on atmospheric dispersion (see 8/19/2022 report).

Plutonium Facility–Decontamination and Decommissioning: Facility personnel held a fact-finding meeting to evaluate a Tuesday event where facility workers discovered unexpected contamination. A leak was identified around two glovebox window seals while performing decontamination activities. The facility workers paused work and notified appropriate personnel. Meeting personnel noted that future decontamination work would include pre-job surveys for contamination around gaskets and removable glovebox surfaces.

Plutonium Facility–Transuranic Waste Management: On Wednesday, the staff observed transuranic waste mobile loading operations in Technical Area 55. The crew successfully loaded twenty-one pipe overpack containers into TRUPACTs for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. This infrequently performed activity was completed within the one-year timeframe for maintaining readiness (see 10/29/2021 report).

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: Facility personnel held a fact-finding meeting to evaluate an event where eighteen dropbox fire dampers unexpectedly closed during troubleshooting of a ground fault within the system. Facility personnel are working to locate the ground fault and conducting an investigation to determine the cause of the unexpected fire damper response. All eighteen fire dampers are back in service following replacement of actuated components.

Emergency Management: On Wednesday, there was an emergency preparedness training drill at the Transuranic Waste Facility. The scenario involved a fire in an electric forklift during a drum movement which caused one of the drums to deflagrate, lose its lid and release material. The forklift driver was also injured during their evacuation from the vehicle but remained ambulatory. The scenario used real meteorological conditions which led to several movements of personnel as wind conditions shifted and protective actions needed to be adjusted.

Federal Oversight: The DOE Office of Enterprise Assessments completed an assessment of specific administrative controls at the Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility. The review identified three deficiencies, one opportunity for improvement, and four positives. One deficiency was that a programmatic administrative control was used instead of a specific administrative control to protect an over-pressurization assumption in the accident analysis. One positive observation was that the plans and rehearsals for the flanged tritium waste container activity are thorough and extensive.