

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 18, 2022

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Boussouf and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending November 18, 2022

Board Activity: On Wednesday, the Board held a public hearing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The hearing included four sessions. The first gathered information from a panel of Office of Environmental Management and N3B personnel on the status of the activities performed by the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management at the Area G transuranic waste management facility. The session also included a public comment period. The second and third sessions involved NNSA and Triad personnel discussing the production activities to be conducted in the Plutonium Facility, the nuclear safety risks the NNSA has accepted, and the state of planned safety improvements to safety system infrastructure and safety programs at the facility. The fourth session took additional commentary from members of the public.

On Tuesday, the Board members and accompanying staff were onsite. They held meetings with Triad, N3B, NNSA, and Environmental Management personnel and toured the Plutonium Facility. The tour included several laboratory rooms supporting the pit production mission, transuranic waste movement, and the americium separation process. They also looked at safety systems including fire suppression system upgrades, the ventilation system, and the uninterruptible power supply system.

While in New Mexico, the Board members also spoke with members of local stakeholder groups.

N3B–Stop Work: N3B management has reviewed and released all work other than electrical and lockout/tagout activities (see 11/4/2022 report). At Area G, drill and drain activities in the Dome 231 Permacon have resumed following their release. Retrieval of corrugated metal pipes is also now released, and workers performed a mockup activity this week in preparation for resuming hot operations.

Plutonium Facility–Criticality Safety: On Tuesday, facility workers discovered a non-compliance with the mass requirements from the criticality safety posting for a safe in a laboratory room. The workers paused and reported the discovery. The safe has drawers that are partitioned into two sections, and the mass limits for criticality safety apply to each location. Two items were in one section and exceeded the mass limit. The day prior, workers were rearranging items in the safe to support non-destructive assay activities and inadvertently moved the two items into the noncompliant configuration. This over-mass condition is bounded by the upset scenarios in the criticality safety analysis for the safe. Workers restored the safe into compliance and returned it to operations. In order to prevent recurrence of similar events, facility personnel are evaluating corrective actions including driving consistency between the location definitions for criticality safety and material accountability.