

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 24, 2023

TO: Katherine R. Herrera, Acting Technical Director
FROM: A. Boussouf and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending February 24, 2023

Staff Activity: D. Brown, M. Dunlevy, and P. Migliorini were on site to start their review of the enhanced chemical compatibility evaluation process for transuranic waste (see 7/8/2022 report). The team went to the analytical chemistry laboratory and the aqueous chloride room in the Plutonium Facility to better understand those processes in terms of the chemicals used and transuranic waste generated from them. D. Brown also observed Central Characterization Project activities on site.

Plutonium Facility–Readiness: A management self-assessment (MSA) team completed its review to assess the readiness to perform the upcoming campaign to process large quantities of heat-source plutonium (see 2/17/2023 report). On Thursday, the team briefed NNSA Field Office and Triad personnel on their initial results, which included five pre-start findings, two post-start findings, and four noteworthy practices. Pre-start findings included revising procedures, further analyzing hazards to ensure controls are integrated into the procedures, and adding specificity to the startup plan as called for by DOE Standard 3006, *Planning and Conducting Readiness Reviews*. The MSA team stated that the activity is ready to move to the contractor readiness assessment once the pre-start findings are completed. A federal readiness assessment will be completed concurrent with the contractor readiness assessment.

PF-400: Earlier this month, the NNSA Field Office authorized PF-400, the facility formerly known as the Radiological Laboratory Utility Office Building, to operate as a hazard category 3 nuclear facility. An independent review team from the local and Sandia NNSA Field Offices reviewed all pre-start corrective actions and concluded they had been satisfactorily completed. Initial operations will take place under an approved startup plan.

Environmental Management–Contractor Assurance: On Thursday, the Environmental Management Field Office issued the final report for a combined assessment of N3B’s contractor assurance system and the Field Office’s oversight activities. The assessment report lists fourteen opportunities for improvement leading to seventeen recommendations to improve processes. Recommendations included: better balancing of federal oversight activities between emerging issues and routine activities; improve risk-based oversight and refine metrics to better inform risk using guidance from the Energy Facility Contractors Group, other DOE sites, or industry best practices; and, provide effective tools to federal staff to consolidate the results of oversight efforts into defensible feedback to the contractor.