

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 21, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending June 21, 2024

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: During performance of the annual ventilation system function test, personnel found that the system did not automatically shut down when instrument air pressure dropped below a certain threshold. They paused the procedure, repressurized the air system and began troubleshooting. They discovered that an isolation valve upstream was closed, isolating the switch that would actuate the shutdown. This valve is not manipulated in any surveillances and was in the correct open position during a March surveillance. With the valve in the proper position, the workers successfully completed the surveillance. However, there were challenges restoring desired differential pressures to all areas following the ventilation surveillance, so the facility remained in limited operations mode until Tuesday morning to allow for additional troubleshooting of the ventilation system. The valve that was in the wrong position, and its equivalent on the other side of the building, have been administratively locked to prevent inadvertent manipulation. Facility personnel are also performing a system alignment checklist on the instrument air system. And they plan to look for other valves in key systems that could be inadvertently manipulated.

Plutonium Facility–Fire Protection: On Tuesday, the resident inspector observed that bagged air filters in excess of posted transient combustible limits were still present on the floor of a filter room (see 6/14/2024 report). Two other filter rooms in the basement also had significant quantities of bagged filters staged in them. The fourth of these rooms was clear of excess combustibles.

Plutonium Facility–Readiness: On Tuesday, Triad submitted to the NNSA Field Office for approval the corrective action plan and causal analysis from the contractor and federal readiness assessments supporting receipt and repackaging of large quantities of heat source plutonium (see 6/30/2023, 4/26/2024 reports).

Site Electrical Power: Lightning on Wednesday caused power outages throughout several Technical Areas. No nuclear facilities were impacted by the power loss. The Emergency Operations Center lost power briefly; there was no loss of function as the backup system performed as designed. This power interruption was part a series of events being addressed by emergency operations personnel Wednesday afternoon including a small brush fire in Technical Area 72, an ursine incursion, and severe weather throughout the state.

Environmental Management Field Office: On Monday, Ms. Jessica Kunkle became the new manager of the Environmental Management Field Office.