

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 13, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: B. Broderick and C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending April 13, 2007

Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility: Due to unexpected costs only recently recognized, LANL is starting to demobilize the Waste Management Risk Mitigation project, which involved constructing a new Hazard Category 2 pump house and tank facility, now 75 % complete; NNSA has asked for an explanation. This project was intended to increase low-activity liquid waste storage and address concerns that arose during the Cerro Grande fire (site rep weeklies 4/7/06, 1/27/06, 8/30/02).

Contaminated Injury Investigation: Last week, LANL management released the investigation report for the CMR and TA-55 contaminated wound incidents that occurred in January (site rep weekly 3/9/07). The exposures to affected personnel are still being determined. NNSA appears to have accepted the lab's investigation. LANL is developing a corrective action plan.

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): Weaknesses in first-line supervision contributed to the above incidents (site rep weekly 3/9/07). TA-55 is improving first-line management and span of control, including posting about 50 to 60 new management positions that will replace current non-managerial team leader positions. Also, as part of the response to the above incidents, TA-55 management is conducting a glovebox-by-glovebox inspection; the LANL criticality safety group recently joined the inspection team and is simultaneously conducting the annual review of fissile material operations.

On Monday, this joint team discovered two staging gloveboxes in an aqueous processing room that had liquid lines that were valved-out but not disconnected or locked-out, as required by the criticality safety posting; the lines were subsequently locked-out. This was a good catch and illustrates the value of such periodic reviews for continuously improving facility safety.

Transuranic Waste Operations: LANL continues to make progress toward startup of the high-activity waste drum campaign in the WCRR repackaging facility, but the schedule appears increasingly at risk (site rep weekly 3/30/07). Specifically, NNSA has approved the exception to the DOE startup order (DOE O 425.1C) and has informally provided final comments on the WCRR safety basis but has slipped issuance of a safety evaluation report (SER) by 10 days, to Apr 23rd.

While LANL believes that they will be ready for an operational readiness review (ORR) by mid-May, the SER slippage could delay finalizing procedures, training and qualifying operators, and conducting the initial periodic inspections and surveillances of safety systems – thereby impacting readiness for a mid-May ORR. That said, further delay in WCRR startup could eventually impact disposition of both low and high activity drums, which has safety implications for Area G (site rep weekly 1/5/07).

Contractor Assurance System (CAS): LANL is implementing the CAS, but CAS maturity still appears several years away, considering that: • the late discovery of problems with the Waste Management Risk Mitigation Project are possibly linked to the maturity level of CAS; • LANL managers are still having difficulties using the issue management software (LIMITS), which is evolving; • many scheduled assessments are being delayed; • numerous long-standing corrective actions from occurrence reports are now being rapidly but not necessarily effectively closed (site rep weekly 12/1/06).