

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 11, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: B. Broderick and C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending May 11, 2007

Federal Oversight: NNSA has directed LANL to implement a set of compensatory measures to address apparent inconsistencies in the application of federal and laboratory readiness review requirements. These measures include requiring NNSA approval of all startup notification reports for nuclear facilities and activities before LANL starts each readiness review and the activity. NNSA expects that implementation of new LANL readiness review procedures that actively include federal personnel in the process for determining level-of-review should resolve these issues.

Transuranic Waste Operations: NNSA has informally directed LANL to conduct a contractor operational readiness review (ORR) for the WCRR repackaging facility's high-activity waste drum campaign; formal direction, including revoking the DOE O 425.1C exemption, is expected shortly. The site reps believe this pushes the federal ORR into July and the campaign's start into early August.

This week, the RANT shipping facility found radioactivity (120 dpm) on an in-line filter while drawing a vacuum on a TRUPACT shipping container; radioactivity (50 dpm) was also found on a second attempt. LANL has sent samples to Carlsbad to establish isotopics, which will determine whether the radioactivity is naturally occurring or contamination from a waste drum.

The Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility (RLWTF) resumed caustic waste receipt this week after the Plutonium Facility (TA-55) repaired hardware that had interrupted such transfers in March. RLWTF is no longer pursuing a waste processing campaign prior to entering an extended outage to address material condition issues, expected to be finished in September. Without near-term processing capability, waste discharges from TA-55 will be limited by RLWTF storage capacities.

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): TA-55's processes that generate caustic liquid waste, such as those that supply feed to pit manufacturing, have been idle but are now ramping up; LANL currently estimates that the RLWTF caustic waste receipt tank will reach capacity in November. TA-55 is pursuing strategies to temporarily ease reliance on caustic generating processes since operations like pit manufacturing could be impacted due to lack of feed if the RLWTF outage discussed above does not finish as scheduled; such contingency planning appears warranted to reduce schedule pressure on the RLWTF outage, which is long overdue and needs to be deliberately executed.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): CMR has completed fire door installation and, on Thursday, closed out the Justification for Continued Operation (JCO) for potential wing-to-wing flash-over across the spinal corridor during a fire (site rep weeklies 3/2/07, 11/17/06).

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): WETF is engaged in a multi-year effort to reduce its legacy inventory, which reduces risk to both workers and the public. For example, the current tritium inventory is significantly less than assumed in the 2002 safety basis and is expected to be an order-of-magnitude less within a few years. Also, legacy items that caused an unanticipated room and stack release in January 2001 have been properly disposed as waste (site rep weekly 3/14/03).