

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 14, 2007

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** B. Broderick and C. H. Keilers, Jr.  
**SUBJECT:** Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 14, 2007

**Transuranic Waste Operations:** This week, LANL received authorization to begin operations involving greater than 56 plutonium-equivalent curies at the WCRR repackaging facility. This is a significant step in the effort to disposition 235 drums at Area G that represent about 2% of the above ground inventory, by number, but approximately one-fourth of the above-ground inventory, by radioactivity. These drums help to drive some of the highest consequence postulated accidents at the laboratory (site rep weeklies 8/3/07, 2/2/07, and 12/8/06). The first high activity drum was processed on Thursday. Initial operations will involve lower hazard drums to allow personnel to build proficiency with new processes prior to remediating the most hazardous drums.

Physical modifications and operator training continue at the RANT shipping facility to support implementation of a safety basis change designed to facilitate timely waste disposition and improve the efficiency of shipping operations (site rep weekly 6/22/07). An independent verification review for implementation of the new safety basis controls is scheduled to begin September 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility (RLWTF):** LANL can currently transfer and store, but not process, acidic and caustic radioactive liquid waste. On Thursday, the acidic waste tank was 81% full and storage space capacity will become operationally limiting soon (site rep weekly 7/13/07).

**Transportation:** On Monday, a tritium-contaminated polisher was delivered from the Target Fabrication Facility (TA-35) to the Sigma Complex (TA-3-66). Upon arrival at Sigma, the worker did not stage the polisher in a radiological control area, as required. The worker also left the facility without having the polisher surveyed by an RCT. This violated an institutional requirement developed in response to the 2005 Type B investigation involving the spread of Am-241 contamination from Sigma. This is also the latest in a series of events that indicates requirements and controls associated with material movements are not always well understood and implemented when moves are conducted by personnel outside of LANL's packaging and transportation group (site rep weekly 8/17/07).

**Integrated Work Management:** A revision to LANL's governing process for integrated work management is targeted to be issued by the end of this month. Among other things, this revision will require Facility Operations Directors (FOD) to review and approve integrated work documents for moderate and high hazard activities. This is positive, although staffing levels for FOD organizations will make performing this new function challenging (site rep weekly 8/31/07). IWM assessments for all functional areas are scheduled for FY08 using a tailored set of criteria developed by NNSA.

**Chemical Management:** An emergency management review by the DOE Office of Independent Oversight (HS-63) in 2006 concluded that LANL was not adequately managing its chemical inventory. Despite efforts to address identified deficiencies, recent walkdowns by LANL personnel found that problems related to chemical accounting and tracking persist. As a result, direction has been issued for chemical owners and responsible line managers to perform a physical inventory of chemical containers to update and validate the inventory tracking system by the end of the month. Additionally, FODs are being required to develop processes to prevent unauthorized hazardous chemicals from entering their facilities and begin implementing these processes by November 30th.