

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 22, 2008

TO: T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: W. Linzau and R. Quirk, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Hanford Activity Report for the Week Ending August 22, 2008

Staff member D. Ogg was on-site to discuss the Sludge Treatment Project, the status of various other RL projects, and how they will be impacted by the contract transitions.

River Corridor Closure Project (RCCP): A small, short-duration fire occurred in a trench at a burial ground during remediation activities. The fire lasted less than 15 seconds and appeared to be a burning metal. No releases of contamination or hazardous chemicals were reported. It appears the operators followed the emergency response procedures, including smothering the material with dirt, evacuating the area, and calling the Hanford Fire Department (HFD). The HFD confirmed the fire was out using infrared heat detectors and that conditions were stable. The project is formulating a recovery plan, which will include analyzing samples of the material to determine the appropriate controls. This burial ground is known to contain pyrophoric materials (see Hanford Activity Report 11/10/06).

Site-Wide Emergency Exercise: The Richland Operation Office (RL) provided the evaluation report for the yearly site emergency exercise conducted in June. The report confirms weaknesses noted by the site rep during observations at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The most significant problem noted was the poor communications between responders at the incident site and the EOC. Delays in establishing clear lines of communication caused a delay in properly categorizing the emergency. It appears this deficiency and a number of observations were captured by the drill team and steps are being taken to address the weaknesses.

Pacific Northwest National Lab: The site rep attended a fact-finding for a small spill event at the Radiochemical Processing Laboratory and noted that the conduct of the fact-finding was ineffective in capturing important facts. The leader of the session failed to address whether the procedure was followed, appropriate protective clothing was worn, and if the work planning addressed job hazards. The focus during the fact-finding was solely on response to the event.

Contract Transitions: The site rep accompanied contractor managers of the RCCP and the new Plateau Remediation Contract during K-West facility walkdowns. The walkdowns of these facilities in surveillance and maintenance mode included inside K-West Reactor, the water tunnels, and a number of the ancillary buildings, but did not include the basin. The walkdowns were thorough and the facilities were generally free of debris.

The new Tank Operation contractor stated that all operations, such as waste transfers, will be stopped immediately before contract transition, and they are developing detailed schedules for specific work activities that will be permitted during the first weeks after transition.

Tank Farms: The Office of River Protection (ORP) issued their final report for their assessment of the safety-significant leak detection systems and Monitoring and Control System (MCS) (see Hanford Activity Report 4/11/08). ORP concluded that having non-safety systems connected to the MCS was not a finding, but observed that the design of the MCS did not minimize interfaces between safety and non-safety systems.