

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 14, 2005

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** C. H. Keilers, Jr.  
**SUBJECT:** Los Alamos Report for Week Ending October 14, 2005

Jordan was on site this week augmenting site rep coverage.

**DOE Independent Oversight:** The DOE Office of Independent Oversight and Performance Assessment (DOE-OA) is here this week and next inspecting NNSA & LANL management programs for environment, health, and safety; a major focus of their inspection is status of corrective actions developed in response to last year's resumption reviews. They return in mid-Nov to validate findings.

**Waste Operations:** Based on a LANL management self-assessment, NNSA has approved restart of examining and repackaging of transuranic waste in the TA-50 WCRR Facility; this is an essential step for LANL to move forward on the Quick-to-WIPP risk reductions (site rep weekly 9/16/05).

**Plutonium-238 Operations:** By Oct 31<sup>st</sup>, LANL expects to complete decontamination of the room that was contaminated in August 2003. Currently, four cans in the room await packaging; the remainder (~234) have been packaged for eventual shipment to WIPP via Area G or for eventual stabilization (e.g., pyrolysis) and disposition (e.g., aqueous recovery) within TA-55.

DOE-NE (Nuclear Energy) and LANL currently expect LANL to resume bench-scale and start up full-scale aqueous recovery operations in Nov 2005 and Feb 2006, respectively. NNSA is requiring that "applicable" TA-55 interim TSRs first be implemented for both lines to address the building leak-path issue; it appears appropriate for NNSA and LANL to formally agree on specifically which new TSR controls must be implemented and verified as a pre-start for these operations. Some of the other steps required to support full-scale startup are: (a) resolution of remaining questions on effectiveness of safety basis controls (e.g., hydrogen generation); (b) closure of pre-start findings and definition of path-forward for post-starts from the LANL June 2005 readiness assessment (RA); (c) final LANL & NNSA RAs, covering also applicable interim TSRs; and (d) opening safe disposition pathways for residues and waste, preferably including the pyrolysis pathway (site rep weeklies 9/16/05, 5/27/05).

**NNSA Type B Accident Investigations:** NNSA has completed its investigation into the TA-48 acid inhalation injuries; the investigation into the Am-241 release continues (site rep weekly 8/12/05). Among conclusions from the former are that the acid injuries resulted from mixing and using acids outside a functional hood; those involved did not believe that a reportable accident had occurred; management did not ensure that workers recognized the full extent of hazards or that the workers were trained in the work control process or that the workers followed institutional practices; the workers' drive to accomplish research took priority over housekeeping, even though both had equivalent hazards; by reducing oversight and field presence, the NNSA Site Office (LASO) lost an opportunity to gauge the LANL integrated work management process; LASO followup on previous investigations has not driven LANL to establish a robust line management assessment program; LASO followup has also been slow, indicating weak NNSA commitment to using feedback to drive improvements.

**Management:** The LANL Institutional Assurance Board (IAB) and the Nuclear Safety Executive Board (NSEB) have been increasingly effective; LASO participation with these boards has dropped, which is unfortunate. The IAB does change control for the Operational Efficiency Project, while the NSEB reviews closure of PAAA corrective actions. LANL staff presentations before the NSEB also provide a uniquely useful and succinct analysis on the state and direction of LANL nuclear operations.