

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 25, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: J. S. Contardi, SRS Site Representative
SUBJECT: SRS Report for Week Ending February 25, 2005

Staff member Dan Ogg was onsite this week for reviews of nuclear material stabilization and transuranic (TRU) drum processing.

Savannah River National Laboratory: While transferring high-activity waste within the Savannah River National Laboratory, the liquid waste was inadvertently sent to the wrong waste tank. Approximately 100 gallons were transferred prior to termination. An indicator light notified the operator that the transfer path was not properly aligned. The tank which received the waste was empty and is normally used for high-activity waste storage.

Site wide, this event is the third inadvertent transfer during the last several weeks. The recent incidents indicate a need to reevaluate previously implemented corrective actions. Human errors have been a common cause for all three events.

TRU Drum Processing: Due to several safety related concerns, the Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC) suspended TRU drum processing at the Solid Waste Management Facility in December (Site Rep weekly 12/10/04). To date, two independent investigations have been completed as well as a root cause analysis. WSRC will address the identified deficiencies in a corrective action plan which is expected to be completed in early March.

Resumption of drum processing has been separated into three phases. Phase I entails processing of unvented drums currently stored on the TRU pads through vent and purge. Phase II will allow resumption of characterization activities for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and Phase III will allow culvert retrieval of drums. Phase I operations resumed in early February. Thus far, 9 of the 295 unvented drums have been processed through vent and purge. Phase II operations are expected to begin in mid-March. While a DSA upgrade is developed, the existing Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) and a Justification for Continued Operations will form the authorization basis for near term operations.

HEPA Filter Replacement Project: This week, WSRC replaced the last HEPA filter which had not been tested at the Filter Test Facility (Site Rep weekly 08/20/04). The project finished well ahead of the schedule with a total of 407 filters replaced.

H-Canyon Conduct of Operations: Recent events involving crane operations, sample aisle operations, and outside facility operations, have gained senior management attention relating to conduct of operations. Although the frequency of the events are comparable to other site activities, the events indicate an opportunity for improvement. An improvement plan has been implemented to reinforce management expectations, revise procedures, increase management oversight, enhance training, and improve equipment.