

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 25, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending July 25, 2003

Integrated Safety Management (ISM): The site rep has observed increased management attention, leading to improvements in the investigation, trending, and reporting of safety issues by LANL, including nuclear safety issues. Examples include increased use of causal analysis; increased reporting of events in nuclear facilities under Price Anderson; and thorough investigations into two accidents that occurred in April in non-nuclear facilities (i.e., chemical flash-burn to a researcher, multiple compound fracture to a D&D subcontractor). The lessons learned identified by LANL, even those originating in non-nuclear facilities, are significant and have implications to nuclear operations.

To elaborate on one example, the LANL audits and assessments office recently reviewed conduct of operations in 7 LANL divisions. The team focused on procedures for higher risk work; interviewed management and workers; reviewed records, procedures, hazard control plans; and observed work being performed. The team reported that expectations for procedure development and use had not been clearly established; step-by-step procedures were not always followed; some procedural work was not being done with proper tools and/or personnel protective equipment; procedures were not always accurate, complete, current, and user-friendly; and equipment was not always properly maintained.

This was a solid review. LANL intends to address these findings as part of implementation of the DOE conduct of operations order, added to the contract in 2001. LANL is currently revising its conduct of operations implementation plan to take advantage of operations advisors recently assigned to key LANL managers. The Advisor Program was a commitment by the LANL Director during a Price Anderson enforcement conference (site rep weekly 4/18/03). This LANL initiative recognizes the need here to improve ISM processes in a manner that changes the culture and that will endure. This effort has the potential to increase emphasis on personnel following safety requirements, on adequate work planning to meet requirements, and on improving supervision with emphasis on safety requirements when appropriate – all areas warranting attention (site rep weekly 3/21/03).

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): LANL has proposed to slip the NNSA readiness assessment (RA) for the new Pu-238 scrap recovery line two weeks (i.e., to 8/18) to provide margin in addressing the LANL RA team's pre-start findings. The NNSA RA team will be here next Tuesday, tour the line, and attend the LANL RA team briefing to management. The LANL RA report should be ready then.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): WETF will miss a July 25th milestone for Technical Safety Requirement (TSR) implementation. The site rep understands that WETF is curtailing programmatic work in order to focus on TSR implementation.

Authorization Basis (AB): NNSA has several proposed AB upgrades in for action including for the Plutonium Facility (TA-55, since April 2002), liquid & solid waste operations (TA-50, TA-54), TRU waste shipping container packaging (TA-54 RANT facility), and nuclear radiography (TA-8-23). Implementation of several approved ABs is also not going smoothly, particularly WETF and on-site transportation. LANL recently issued an institutional procedure for annual updates to ABs, but the schedules are undefined. A resource-loaded and effective annual update process could help minimize AB violations, AB near-misses, and AB-operations interface issues seen in the past.