

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 15, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: B. Broderick and R.T. Davis
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending May 15, 2009

The staff held a video-teleconference with NNSA and LANL personnel to discuss the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement project.

Transuranic Waste Operations: This week, the site office requested an exemption to DOE Order 425.1C to allow a Management Self Assessment (MSA) to verify readiness to retrieve 16 remote handled waste canisters at Area G. The exemption request notes an assertion that the planned MSA review is essentially indistinguishable from an appropriately graded Order-compliant readiness review. The exemption request was approved by NNSA-HQ.

Consistent with the exemption request discussed above, the site office also directed that the site office manager be identified as the startup authorization authority (SAA) and that a plan of action for the MSA be submitted for approval. On Wednesday, LANL started the self assessment and completed field activities and interviews on Friday. Although some independent personnel were added to the MSA team, several of the key functional areas were assessed by facility and programmatic personnel responsible for achieving readiness and ultimately performing these activities.

The Waste Disposition Project (WDP) Program Director recently chartered a Senior Readiness Review Board consisting of laboratory senior management to evaluate an activity's readiness posture and approve the declaration of readiness in advance of formal review. For this remote handled retrieval activity, the Board met on Friday to perform this function after completion of the MSA field activities. Following resolution of MSA pre-start findings and startup approval from the SAA, this activity is planned to begin in late-May (site rep weekly 5/1/09).

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): The credited CMR fire alarm system includes batteries that provide back-up power to allow the system to perform its safety function if primary facility power is lost. These fire alarm system batteries must meet requirements specified in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 72, *National Fire Alarm Code*. Recently, CMR facility personnel recognized that the institutional procedure used to inspect and test these batteries did not include formal acceptance criteria that satisfied NFPA 72 requirements. This discovery prompted a broad extent of condition review to identify other credited fire alarm systems with back-up power supplies whose operability may be affected by the deficient institutional procedure.

In the course of evaluating CMR fire alarm system operability, facility management concluded that a table listing fire alarm control panel battery capacities in the interim Technical Safety Requirements document did not have a defensible technical basis. This discovery prompted facility management to declare a potential inadequacy of the safety analysis.

Emergency Management: LANL has established a 24 hour-a-day, 7 day-a-week Emergency Operations Support Center, staffed by trained personnel, to create a single point of contact for reporting and dispositioning non-life threatening abnormal events or conditions at the laboratory.