

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 7, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director

FROM: C. H. Keilers, Jr.

SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending July 7, 2006

Site-wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS): NNSA has issued a draft SWEIS; NNSA's preferred alternative is to expand operations, including achieving an 80 pit/year manufacturing rate.

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): NNSA has extended the interim Technical Safety Requirements (iTSRs), which LANL expects to have fully implemented this month (site rep weekly 6/16/06).

Authorization Basis: LANL is not compliant with the Nuclear Safety Management rule (10 CFR 830) because of the state of the nuclear facility safety bases; NNSA and LANL have made little progress since May 2004 when the Board issued a letter on this topic (e.g., site rep weeklies 4/21/06, 6/17/05). Last Friday (6/30), NNSA informed LANL that it expects LANL to remedy the lack of current, compliant safety bases during the next year and then to comply with the rule, including submitting high-quality annual updates; NNSA also expects LANL to manage the safety basis workload, including considering the severe constraints on federal safety basis expertise.

Operational Efficiency (OE) Project: Last week, LANL confirmed its intent to internalize the OE safety initiatives and to close the OE Project by Oct 1st. In early 2005, OE was envisioned as a multi-year effort to systematically reduce a broad spectrum of safety risks; it was the product of some hard lessons learned before and during the LANL stand-down of 2004. Since then, the scope has decreased to mainly include defining necessary resources and developing plans and procedures; implementation of many initiatives was postponed due to contract transition (site rep weeklies 6/9/06, 3/11/05).

The new LANL management intends to close OE after achieving a set of intermediate milestones; their perspective is that operational efficiency should be a way of doing business rather than a project. In parallel, LANL has launched a new project to develop an "integrated scientific-methodology-based" approach to operations, maintenance, engineering, and training. While the signals are mixed, this appears to include stepping back and considering whether program and facility work should once again be planned and executed via separate processes; this would be counter to conclusions of several NNSA and LANL accident investigations since 2002. LANL intends to have the "integrated programs" defined in September, with resource-loaded implementation plans to follow.

Feedback and Improvement: While the new LANL management has done well at issue discovery and rediscovery (e.g., critiques), they have yet to substantively improve issue management, operations, and safety. Some examples are: • last week's suspension and partial resumption of hoisting and rigging operations were informally promulgated and controlled, causing some confusion; lessons learned from prior LANL suspensions remain unaddressed (e.g., site rep weekly 8/26/05); • on Thursday (7/6), TA-55 personnel self-reported a criticality safety infraction, which led to a brief suspension of operations on Friday; such infractions are a recurring issue and the subject of a lab corrective action plan (site rep weekly 3/10/06); • last Tuesday (6/27), the Sigma Complex (TA-3-66) received a potential internally contaminated package from TA-55 that was not what was expected; there are parallels to the Am-241 contamination event of a year ago, also the subject of a corrective action plan (site rep weeklies 2/3/06, 5/31/06); • LANL has postponed their readiness assessment for starting up more trailers on the TA-55 safeguarded trailer pad because findings from the startup of the first trailer a year ago remain open (site rep weeklies 7/8/05, 10/7/05). A common theme here, which applies lab-wide, is the continuing need for followup on known issues and corrective actions.