

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 9, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: J. S. Contardi/M.T. Sautman, SRS Site Representatives
SUBJECT: SRS Report for Week Ending November 10, 2006

DNFSB Activity: E. Elliott and C. Goff were onsite for a criticality safety review.

Defense Waste Processing Facility: Last weekend, a Site Area Emergency was declared due to a spill of approximately 1,500 gallons of 90 wt% formic acid. The acid filled the collection sump and overflowed into a diked area. The facility has been in a maintenance outage for several weeks and no radioactive operations were occurring during the spill. The contractor has determined that the spill resulted from removing a lockout prior to performing the necessary restoration steps to properly reconfigure the valve lineups.

Saltstone: The DOE Readiness Assessment (RA) began this week. During the grout run, the hopper radar level detector began to have erratic readings, going from one end of the scale to the other repeatedly, before the interlock to the feed was tripped. Recovery actions were implemented to remove grout from the system. Engineers believe they have identified the cause of the inaccurate readings and have adjusted the settings for the radar. The grout run will be performed for the RA team again next week.

Tritium Extraction Facility: The Site Reps met with contractor senior management to discuss reliability issues with the ventilation, process, and other systems that were encountered during the recent readiness reviews. Even though TEF is a new facility, the Site Reps encouraged them to fully implement the site system health report process, performance tracking and trending, and system inspections. Management was receptive to this suggestion.

Hazardous Mixed Waste Processing: While preparing several mixed waste drums for processing, the operators noticed liquid under one drum. The operators stopped work and had the liquid surveyed. The surveys indicated the presence of tritium levels significantly above those planned for the job. The higher tritium levels should not have been a surprise since generator data indicated significant quantities of tritium contamination. Given this information, the lack of proper hazard identification represents a significant breakdown in activity level work planning for this evolution.

SRNL: While conducting differential pressure readings in a high contamination/airborne radioactivity area, a worker received a puncture wound to his foot. The puncture occurred while the worker stepped on a piece of fallen insulation which contained a nail. Surveys of the nail and a subsequent wound count were both negative.

HB-Line: This week, facility personnel successfully vented two potentially pressurized Pu-238 standards (Site Rep weekly 5/5/06).