

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 17, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: T. D. Burns Jr. and C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 17, 2004

Nichols was here this week supplementing site rep coverage of LANL resumption activities.

Integrated Safety Management (ISM): LANL has released its investigation report on the laser-induced eye injury that occurred in a non-nuclear facility (site rep weekly 7/16/2004). The report identifies the primary causes as inadequate work control and non-compliance with safety requirements. The uncertainty introduced by the behavior aspect of this event contributed to LANL management's decision to shutdown operations, along with recognition that such behavior negates the integrated work management improvements that LANL has invested heavily in making during the last year (site rep weeklies 5/7/04, 10/17/03, 9/12/03). LANL is committed to implementing an improved work control process within the next few months.

LANL Resumption Status: Schedules for the 9 LANL readiness reviews (LRRs) for higher-risk nuclear activities (Level-3) continue to slip. TA-55 and CMR will likely be the first nuclear facilities to have LRRs. These will likely begin the week of Sep 27th and could be quickly followed by LRRs for the other nuclear operations. LANL's most optimistic estimate for finishing all 19 nuclear and non-nuclear LRRs is end of October and assumes the following: the management self-assessments (MSAs) were high quality; the MSAs identified a manageable list of issues; few new issues are found by the LRRs; and some LRR assessment activities can be paralleled.

Overall, most Level 3 MSAs have slipped because of evolving expectations and the experience-level of many MSA team members. Most MSA reports are expected into the Resumption Review Board (RRB) during the next two weeks. This will probably saturate the RRB, which continues to be the primary means by which LANL is ensuring uniform quality and consistency in the reviews. The shortest pathway to safe resumption requires the RRB to continue to thoroughly review these MSA reports and ensure that the MSAs were comprehensive in scope and identification of issues.

Because of mounting schedule pressure, NNSA and LANL intend to reduce the scope of the LRRs. Compared to the MSAs, the LRRs will focus more on management competency, personnel behavior, and integrated safety management. Breakdowns in these specific areas directly led to the decision to shutdown. The LRRs will also focus on validating issues identified during the MSAs. However, counter to standard practice for readiness assessments, the LRRs will not explore MSA conclusions in areas that the MSA teams deemed acceptable unless an LRR team discovers a new issue, which the LRR team will then pursue. NNSA and LANL are accepting the reduced scope because of the robust RRB review process and because of a degree of independence introduced into the MSA process by involvement of federal and LANL Performance Surety Division staff.

Training: NNSA is assessing training at its sites in response to a Board letter (7/9/03). NNSA intends to conduct its performance-based assessment at LANL as part of the LRRs. LANL is also preparing a corrective action plan in response to an earlier NNSA assessment (site rep weeklies 7/9/04, 7/16/04).