

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 11, 2002

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending January 11, 2002

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). RFETS has completed approximately 290 DOE-STD-3013 containers (not counting those in a reject/rework status). This includes at least 34 DOE-STD-3013 containers completed this week, a weekly high since PuSPS startup in mid-June. This kind of weekly throughput by PuSPS will be needed consistently to meet the current projected completion of plutonium metal and oxide repackaging in PuSPS by October 2002 (see last week's site rep. report). (3-A)

Radiological Uptakes in Building 771 - Update. As reported last week, RFETS externally reported that 2 radiological control technicians (RCTs) received uptakes of 1.6 and 0.3 rem CEDE, respectively, as the result of removing a small amount of dust and paint chips from a floor area in Building 771 in early October 2001. As part of follow-up, the site rep. inquired with RFETS management on the timeliness of both internal reporting to site management and external reporting on this event. There had been no formal internal reporting of this event to site management when bioassay data was received in early December indicating a substantial uptake. Steps are being taken by Kaiser-Hill to improve the timeliness of notifying site management of such uptakes and not wait several weeks until a final investigation report is issued. DOE-RFFO is still reviewing the timeliness of external reporting as well as other aspects of this event. The site rep. and staff will continue to follow RFETS actions on this event. (1-C)

Work Control/Conduct of Operations. As reported on October 12th, a Building 776 evacuation was conducted when a chemical odor was detected and several personnel noted symptoms including nausea and coughing. Initial fact-finding revealed that cylinders containing organic compounds had been vented in the mass spectrometry lab. As reported on December 28th, the Kaiser-Hill investigation report identified the main causes as failure to have proper work planning, obtain Building 776 operations authorization, and implement RFETS chemical management program requirements. DOE-RFFO was reviewing the Kaiser-Hill event investigation report.

This week, DOE-RFFO informed Kaiser-Hill management that while the Kaiser-Hill investigation was generally satisfactory, a number of issues were identified. DOE-RFFO noted that the cause determination did not sufficiently explore and identify the reasons why RFETS personnel did not ensure proper work planning, obtain operations authorization, and implement chemical management program requirements prior to the venting operation. Other issues related to analysis of the incident response and potential health impacts to personnel were also noted. DOE-RFFO will formally request that the corrective actions being developed by Kaiser-Hill address these issues. (1-C)

cc
Board Members