

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 19, 1999

**TO:** G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

**FROM:** R. Arcaro, & D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representatives

**SUBJ:** Activity Report for the Week Ending February 19, 1999

Staff members Don Wille, Roger Zavadoski, and Ajit Gwal were on site this week to review the Spent Nuclear Fuel Project.

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): PFP completed Phase II of its deliberate operations for thermal stabilization. Phase III, which allows maximum throughput under enhanced supervision, was originally scheduled to begin the week of March 8 but may now begin as early as next week. While some equipment failures have been experienced, the plant has stayed ahead of schedule. Throughput improvements have been identified during this period that may significantly accelerate thermal stabilization (e.g., cooldown of the furnaces has taken seven hours rather than the predicted nine hours).

Four decision analysis meetings are to be held next week to decide on disposition paths for several material types as required by the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 94-1. Final decisions are expected to be forthcoming on shipment of sand, slag, and crucible residue, location of the pyrolysis unit for stabilization of polycubes, method for stabilization of solutions, and metal and oxide packaging system. Mr. Arcaro intends to attend these meetings.

B. Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility (WESF). Mr. Arcaro toured the WESF on February 16. The large inventory of cesium and strontium continues to be stored in a well-controlled, condition. Given the benign storage mission and a workforce of approximately 75, there is opportunity to perform some deactivation work while awaiting final disposition of the cesium and strontium. There was little evidence that this work is being aggressively pursued. The contractor has no FY99 performance incentives associated with deactivation of WESF.

C. Tank Farms Operations. Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. performed an operational readiness review (ORR) for the Light Duty Utility Arm (LDUA). Although the LDUA passed the ORR, the findings were serious enough to indicate to tank farms management that recent successes in the tank farms may have led to complacency with regard to formal conduct of operations. As a result, the characterization organization is requiring a period of more deliberate operations to ensure the organization's performance does not slip further. This deliberate slowdown will impact the near term schedule of operations. Notably, the venting of PFP Tank Z-361 will be delayed 1-2 weeks.

cc: Board members