

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 25, 2000

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
J. K. Fortenberry, Deputy Technical Director

FROM: D. F. Owen, D. J. Grover, RFETS Site Representatives

SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending February 25, 2000

Criticality Safety. Additional criticality safety requirement violations/deficiencies occurred at RFETS this past week (see the past two site rep. reports). In Building 707, a supervisor failed to properly report or respond to an observed violation of a posted limit and then proceeded to remedy the violation without consulting criticality safety personnel as required. Another drum movement violating a criticality spacing requirement occurred in Building 371. This improper movement occurred after compensatory measures from the previous drum criticality spacing requirement violation (discussed in the site rep. report of February 11, 2000) were lifted based on completion of remedial training rather than on a specified period of adequate performance.

The site reps. discussed the recent violations with DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill management. Subsequently, Kaiser-Hill conducted safety stand-downs to focus building management, supervisor and worker attention on the need to comply with criticality safety requirements. The stand-downs emphasized the need to stop work and seek criticality safety personnel guidance when violations are identified or questions arise. Kaiser-Hill also initiated actions to improve the reporting and tracking process for criticality safety deficiencies. The site reps. will continue to follow this issue. (3-A, 3-B)

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). The PuSPS project has resolved the inner container welding problem by adjusting the relative pressure differential between the interior and exterior of the container. An additional 20 containers have been welded to demonstrate the reliability of the process. Preparations for the planned startup of metal packaging have resumed.

Construction of the stabilization portion of the system is progressing with the ventilation ducts and gloveboxes completed. Installation of the stabilization furnaces is in progress. Due to the delays in startup of metal packaging, stabilization system construction has proceeded to the point where Kaiser-Hill is reevaluating the strategy calling for the startup of metal packaging (now projected for April) followed by the startup of oxide stabilization and packaging several months later. The alternative is to complete the stabilization system construction and planned modifications to the packaging system with a single start-up for processing both metal and oxides.

This alternative may be advantageous in completing processing of RFETS metals and oxides by May 2002 as called for in the DOE Implementation Plan for Recommendation 94-1. (3-A)

cc: Board Members