

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 19, 2001

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending October 19, 2001

The site rep. was out of the office through Thursday of this week.

Recommendation 94-1. As noted on September 21st, Building 771 had completed draining of the last remaining liquid (actinide and reagent) process system in support of the December 2001 milestone to remove all liquids from Building 771. This week, DOE-RFFO informed the site rep. that these liquids have been removed from Building 771, completing the milestone. Completion of the March 2002 milestone to process the Building 771 liquids is now projected by December 2001. (3-A)

Work Control/Conduct of Operations. As reported last week, a Building evacuation was conducted when a chemical odor was detected throughout most of Building 776 and several personnel noted symptoms including nausea and coughing. Initial fact-finding revealed that small bottles/cylinders containing various organic compounds were being vented in the mass spectrometry lab area without work/safety planning being performed nor facility operations authorization being obtained.

Late last week, senior Kaiser-Hill management ordered a site-wide safety stand-down of operations to: (1) perform review of all activities for proper scope definition and implementation of safety controls; (2) brief the RFETS workforce on the event and work control/conduct of operations requirements; (3) increase management walk-downs/checks of on-going work for scope definition/safety planning/operations authorization; and (4) improve facility access controls and processes for authorizing work. By week's end, most RFETS operations had been resumed.

Kaiser-Hill investigation of this event is in progress and DOE-RFFO intends to conduct their own formal investigation starting on October 22nd. The site rep. will continue follow of RFETS actions responding to this event. (3-B)

Building 774 Deactivation. A separate occurrence involving work control/conduct of operations occurred on Thursday in Building 774, following the safety stand-down noted above. A subcontractor work crew was to (only) verify that a tank was empty prior to proceeding with tank removal. The crew appropriately stopped the activity when a small amount of liquid was drained from the tank bottom. The crew notified facility operations management and asked for technical review of the issue. Shortly thereafter, however, the crew proceeded to drain the tank without having approved, revised work instructions allowing for tank draining nor having obtained facility operations authorization to perform that task. This issue was identified by a DOE-RFFO Facility Representative. Building 774 management is determining actions to better control subcontractor work. (3-B)

cc Board Members