

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 9, 1998

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

**FROM:** Paul F. Gubanc, Oak Ridge Site Representative

**SUBJ:** Activity Report for Week Ending October 9, 1998

A. Y-12 Enriched Uranium (EU) Phase-A2 Restart: Preparations to declare readiness of EU Phase-A2 processes continue to support starting the LMES Operational Readiness Review (ORR) on October 19. The biggest challenge to that schedule is preparing the Holden Gas Furnace, which the Board staff identified the week of September 14th as not fully satisfying its safety basis controls (i.e., NFPA standards 54 & 86). Subsequent to the identification of this concern, LMES broke the NFPA standards down into individual requirement statements (approximately 700 total) and assigned engineering personnel to assess each of them against the Holden furnace. A final tally of discrepancies has not yet been provided but work is underway to install and test modifications stemming from these reviews. I will follow up next week to ascertain the final results of the furnace review and the LMES root cause analysis of how this situation occurred.

B. Y-12 Enriched Uranium (EU) Phase-B Restart: On October 8, DOE Defense Programs (DP), the DOE Y-12 Site Office (YSO) and LMES jointly discussed plans for the restart of EU Phase-B processes (mostly wet chemical processes). LMES and YSO proposed the following:

1. Only one DOE ORR will be conducted in September 1999 on the wet chemical processes which support new metal production in November 1999.
2. The UF<sub>4</sub> reduction process will be restarted in Summer 1999 following an LMES ORR. A waiver for conducting a DOE ORR will be requested of DOE-HQ.
3. Other "low equity, low risk" processes will be restarted using graded readiness evaluations. These will occur both before and after the DOE ORR.

I have provided this information to the staff (Don Owen). This will require further staff evaluation to assess the hazards of those processes which Y-12 proposes be outside the scope of the DOE ORR.

C. "Whitestone Initiative": This summer, DOE Oak Ridge Operations (ORO) and its contractors created the "Whitestone Initiative"; an effort to have the workforce identify inefficiencies driven by self-imposed, overly prescriptive standards or practices which exceed that which is necessary for safe, secure operations. Since these inefficiencies may include health and safety practices, I am attempting to keep informed on this effort. This week, I identified the following:

1. The effort is identifying some practices which appear wasteful and definitely bear examination (e.g., treating all insulation as asbestos, whether it is or not).
2. To date, approximately 300 suggestions have been received and most have been deemed worthy of additional review. The suggestion period ends October 15.
3. ORO currently tracks only the suggestions and which contractor they were assigned to for further review. ORO does not intend to track the suggestions further, that is left to the contractors. This is similar to the lack of DOE follow up cited in Recommendation 98-1.
4. ORO insists that the contractors understand the limits of their authority to implement suggested changes despite there being no formal direction from ORO on this matter.

I will continue to follow this effort.

cc: Board members