

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 27, 2009

TO: T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: D. L. Burnfield and M. T. Sautman, Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Weekly Report for Week Ending November 27, 2009

Saltstone: Multiple attempts to resume processing of Tank 50 waste were unsuccessful this week. On Monday, a pressure transmitter failed and had to be replaced. On Tuesday, a salt feed flow deviation alarm occurred during the transition of feed from the Clean Cap Batch Tank to the Salt Feed Tank. Software changes were made to address this. On Wednesday, several alarms were received for the grout pump, which was running at unexpectedly high speeds.

Fire Department: The Site Reps observed three live burn drills conducted by the SRS Fire Department (SRSFD) in a hypothetical Savannah River Site (SRS) facility at the Fort Gordon Fire Training Facility. The scenarios involved three station responses to extinguish various fires (real fires and smoke generated by propane burners); rescue contaminated, injured workers; and perform decontamination. The ladder truck was used in one of the scenarios to rescue a worker from the roof of the three-story facility.

L Area: An unauthorized High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtered vacuum cleaner was used to clean up sand and debris as part of an effort to roll back a contamination area. The scope of the activity was expanded, but the additional scope was not reviewed per the Safety Improvement Compensatory Actions and Measures (SICAM) process nor was it scheduled. While the vacuum cleaners are kept in a locked room, the Shift Operations Manager gave a Radiological Control Inspector (RCI) the room key without understanding why he was accessing the room. Normally, a custodian uses a checklist and log to ensure the vacuum is ready for use, but the RCI bypassed this process because he (and apparently many other facility personnel) was unaware of the protocol. Once inside the room, the RCI grabbed a vacuum cleaner and used it, not noticing the tag that said the HEPA filter test expired in 2006. Furthermore, the vacuum cleaner was declared out-of-service because an attempt to test the vacuum cleaner failed because it kept shutting down. Luckily, radiological surveys during and after the vacuum cleaning did not detect any contamination. Corrective actions are being developed to address the above issues as well as other issues that emerged during the fact finding meeting.