

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 27, 2012

TO: T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: W. Linzau and R. Quirk, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Hanford Activity Report for the Week Ending July 27, 2012

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): The contractor held a critique this week for an event in which a smoke detector was inadvertently activated during smoke tests of air flow in the facility. Workers are redoing air flow studies as part of an effort to ensure proper air flow is maintained during the continuing D&D work. Air flow is checked with the use of a smoke generator and, prior to releasing the smoke, workers checked with fire protection personnel on the project to ensure that there were no active smoke detectors in the area. They confirmed that there were no active smoke detectors, but the alarm activated shortly after the release of smoke. During the critique it was discovered that a smoke detector had been marked as deactivated but in reality was still in service. Project management immediately realized there was a failure in configuration management and they are taking steps to prevent recurrence.

Tank Farms: The contractor held a fact finding to understand why there was significant confusion about what actions to take in response to an alarm of a continuous air monitor (CAM) in C Farm. An operator noted indications of problems with the CAM upon arrival in the morning. The operator started the immediate actions which include evacuation of personnel from the farm and notifications of the shift office. When the operator was unable to contact the “day-shift” shift manager, he contacted the office responsible for “off-shift” work. From that point, communications were confused, which resulted in workers proceeding back into the farm prior to the responsible manager providing direction. The alarms were spurious and no hazard existed, but management is taking actions to address the loss of command and control.

The contractor sent a letter to ORP, which noted some of the improvements of the safety basis for the Waste Transfer System will not be completed by the end of the fiscal year. These improvements are a commitment to the Board, and include resolution of some comments from the Independent Qualified Registered Professional Engineer and the examination of waste transfer system pipe segments for corrosion and erosion.

Waste Treatment Plant: The contractor started hazard analysis (HA) for the Low Activity Waste (LAW) and Analytical Laboratory (LAB) facilities. These analyses were delayed until they finished a new procedure and guide for conducting HA. The Nuclear Safety Manager has delayed the HA for the Pretreatment facility until resolution of technical issues. The goal is to complete the HA of LAW and LAB by the end of this year or early next year.

Senior contractor management announced the formation of a Reliability Validation Process organization to review plant systems and processes to assure they will meet mission needs and facilitate readiness reviews prior to commissioning. This new organization appears to be part of the implementation of the “Step Back” initiative introduced in June (see Report 6/22/12).

Plateau Remediation Contractor: The Nuclear Safety Performance Evaluation Board completed an assessment of the contractor’s support organizations (e.g., Nuclear Safety, Engineering, and Emergency Preparedness). Many of the preliminary observations and findings focused on improving processes and procedures. The final report is expected in about a month.