

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 21, 2012

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director  
**FROM:** R.T. Davis and R.K. Verhaagen  
**SUBJECT:** Los Alamos Report for Week Ending December 21, 2012

**Area G Drum Venting System (DVS):** A limited scope Federal Readiness Assessment (FRA) for DVS operations was completed this week. The scope of the FRA was to verify closure of core requirements and pre-start findings from a previous FRA that concluded the contractor had not successfully demonstrated readiness for Hazard Category 2/3 drum venting operations in Area G (see 10/5/12 weekly). The limited scope assessment team recommended that upon adequate closure of their one pre-start finding and site office approval of corrective actions for the three post-start findings, the startup of Hazard Category 2/3 drum venting operations be authorized in Area G. The one pre-start finding identified that facility operators, waste operators, and shift operations supervisors were not qualified in compliance with DOE Order 426.2.

The heaters in Dome 33 with a high failure rate and a failure mechanism that includes dropping hot metal from the failed heating elements have yet to be replaced (see 11/16/12 weekly). One compensatory measure in place includes marking exclusion zones beneath the heaters to prevent personnel injury and to prevent another fire in the dome. During the walkdown of Dome 33 in preparation for the DVS FRA, it was observed that there were combustible materials beneath grating and around tanks within multiple exclusion zones. The contractor has committed to clean out the combustible materials and aggressively pursue replacement of the current heaters with a safer design.

**Plutonium Facility – Control Room Operator and Supervisor Certifications:** On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the site office approved a LANL request for a six month extension of certification of Technical Area (TA)-55 operations center operators and supervisors following the discovery that the certification program was not compliant with DOE Order 426.2 (see 12/7/12 weekly). The LANL request identified compensatory measures that include the development of a TA-55 Operations Center Certification/Qualification improvement process. A condition of approval identified by the site office included requesting the Principal Associate Director of Operations and Business to examine the causes and perform an extent of condition review of the non-compliances. LANL is currently performing a preliminary evaluation of all certified positions to identify potential similar issues. A plan for additional extent of condition reviews that could potentially extend to qualification programs at other LANL facilities, such as Area G DVS operations, is being developed.

**Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) Building – Confinement Vessel Disposition Project:** Laboratory personnel continue startup preparations in CMR Wing 9 to support retrieval and disposition of radiological material contained in nine large metal confinement vessels currently stored at TA-55. LANL recently completed a detailed evaluation of startup preparations and status (similar to the red team reviews performed at Area G). This review identified concerns with the amount of floor practice time for facility workers, procedures (including the Integrated Work Document), and the technical baseline (e.g. incorrect quality assurance levels for some credited safety components). CMR personnel are working on corrective actions to resolve these issues. Earlier this month, LANL conducted an Implementation Verification Review for the safety basis associated with the confinement vessel disposition project. Readiness activities and preparation will continue in 2013 with the contractor and federal operational readiness reviews scheduled for March and June, respectively.