

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 29, 2013

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** S. A. Stokes, Acting Technical Director  
**FROM:** R.T. Davis and R.K. Verhaagen  
**SUBJECT:** Los Alamos Report for Week Ending March 29, 2013

**Area G – Conduct of Operations:** Area G management is taking a number of actions aimed at improving their conduct of operations as activities in Area G ramp up and operations continue around the clock. These actions include: assigning a second deputy facility operations director; taking a safety pause to reiterate safety and compliance over production; re-emphasizing key elements of good conduct of operations; assigning compliance representatives to observe operations; and scheduling a corporate assist assessment. Further, the management self assessment scheduled as part of the startup preparations for Dome 375 Sort, Segregate, and Size Reduce activities has been delayed one week in order to allow the time to properly execute these conduct of operations improvement actions.

**Plutonium Facility:** This week, the Associate Director for Plutonium Science and Manufacturing (ADPSM) directed completion of a 90 minute safety pause over the next week for First Line Managers and team leaders to cover radiological contamination issues. There has been a noticeable increase in skin and laboratory contamination events over the last few months (including three continuous air monitor alarms this week). The safety pause will communicate some of the causes involved in these events along with actions and expectations for improving the current trend. In addition to the safety pause, ADPSM is emphasizing self-monitoring, housekeeping, glove breach issues, and the sharps program to improve Plutonium Facility radiological performance.

**Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE) Training:** EM and NNSA SCWE experts conducted three all day SCWE training courses at the field office. This training was prompted by a commitment in DOE's implementation plan for Board recommendation 2011-1. To date, this course has been delivered 40 times across the complex reaching nearly 1000 trainees. The training session was highly interactive and was attended by senior LANL personnel including the lab director and field office manager.

**Criticality Safety:** The field office recently provided direction to LANL on nuclear criticality safety noting that NNSA is concerned about the insufficient staffing of fully-qualified criticality safety engineers to support the site's current and planned fissile material operations. The letter identifies that LANL is taking actions to address the staffing situation but that it will take more than a year to achieve a mature criticality safety program. Based on the current situation, the field office provided specific direction including the following actions:

- Curtail work on new or significantly revised Criticality Safety Evaluations unless specifically approved by the field office.
- Submit and obtain field office concurrence with the planned time-utilization for qualified criticality safety staff and subcontractors with specific justification for activities not focused on event response, field operations support or training/qualification.
- Submit and obtain field office concurrence with a ranking of fissile material operations based on maturity and level of confidence in the evaluation basis.
- Obtain near-term criticality safety expertise that can provide mentoring to new staff, review complex analytical deliverables and advise senior management on new staff qualifications.