

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 3, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: S. A. Stokes, Acting Technical Director
FROM: R.T. Davis and R.K. Verhaagen
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending May 3, 2013

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): Last week, the field office provided LANL with comments on the proposed safety basis that was submitted last year. The current safety basis has not been substantially updated since 2002. The comments identify numerous deficiencies including an overreliance on administrative versus engineered controls, inadequate fire protection controls, and issues with the hazard analysis methodology. The field office memo directs LANL to document the planned disposition of all stored tritium including identification of legacy materials and justification for continued storage of this material at WETF. In addition, LANL is directed to submit a path-forward to upgrade the safety basis in a manner that is integrated with mission requirements, projected inventory needs, and appropriate assurance of continued safe operations.

Area G – Dome 375 Box Repackaging Line: LANL completed its contractor readiness assessment (CRA) for Sorting, Segregating, Size Reduction and Repackaging (SSSR) activities in Area G, Dome 375. The CRA team concluded that once the four identified pre-start findings have been closed and corrective actions have been developed for nine post-start findings, Hazard Category (HC) 3 SSSR operations can be safely and compliantly performed in the Dome 375 box repackaging line. One pre-start finding identified that there is a limited ability for the supervisor, who is stationed outside the SSSR enclosure, and workers within the enclosure to communicate. This was also identified by the Board's staff during their recent visit (see 4/26/13 weekly).

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) Building – Confinement Vessel Disposition (CVD) project: This week, LANL commenced the Contractor Operational Readiness Review (ORR) for the CVD project. This Contractor ORR is a prerequisite to the Federal ORR currently scheduled to begin the first week of June that will evaluate the readiness of the CVD project to commence HC 2 operations. This startup activity is necessary to clean out and disposition the confinement vessels currently stored in Technical Area-55 (TA-55).

Conduct of Critiques: The Associate Director for Nuclear and High Hazard Operations recently emphasized with Facility Operations Directors the importance of conducting high quality critiques. This emphasis included reiterating expectations for critiquing all anomalous events, conducting critiques in a timely manner, and ensuring the appropriate personnel, including the involved workers, attend scheduled critiques.

Criticality Safety: Consistent with the corrective action plan, the laboratory completed criticality safety assessments at LANL nuclear facilities this week. The review teams identified 3, 4, and 6 findings for TA-55, CMR, and Area G, respectively. In all cases, the assessment teams concluded adequate implementation of the Criticality Safety Program with the exception of identified findings. Notably, one of the findings at Area G identified that supervisors and operations center personnel did not have an adequate understanding of criticality safety requirements. Area G management paused operations based on this finding and conducted appropriate training to resolve this issue. The assessment team also identified findings related to criticality safety staff formally reporting issues to management and the lack of a formal process to track and close criticality safety issues.