

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 6, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.T. Davis, R.K. Verhaagen, and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending December 6, 2013

DNFSB Activity: Staff members Z. Beauvais, J. McComb, and R. Verhaagen attended a course on criticality safety conducted at LANL this week.

LANL Management: On Monday, Cheryl Cabbil assumed the role of Associate Director for Nuclear and High Hazard Operations.

Plutonium Facility – Criticality Safety: LANL recently submitted a report providing status and the path forward to the field office on the Plutonium Facility programmatic pause. The path forward includes two improvement plans: one focused on the institutional criticality safety program; and the second on Plutonium Facility conduct of operations and criticality safety improvements. The path forward identifies high-level areas for improvement; however, many key details and decisions that are needed to drive resolution of identified deficiencies have yet to be determined.

NNSA Oversight: Last month, the field office and laboratory jointly approved the Strategic Performance Evaluation Plan (SPEP) for fiscal year 2014. NNSA's approach for this SPEP is similar to last year with five performance objectives each supported by several broad contributing factors uniformly applied for all NNSA sites. These objectives are supplemented with a limited number of site-specific outcomes, including the following LANL outcomes of interest:

- Develop the plutonium strategy for the complex and advance recapitalization and modernization of the plutonium infrastructure at LANL.
- Implement revised plutonium disposition program goals and objectives for the complex; complete plutonium oxide production requirements at LANL; and achieve surplus fissile material program objectives.
- Demonstrate measurable improvements/maturation in the LANL safety culture; improve Nuclear and High Hazard Operations safety performance in areas including, but not limited to, formality of operations and safety basis implementation. Complete implementation of corrective actions to ensure long-term viability of the LANL criticality safety program.

Similar to last year, NNSA Headquarters management prohibited the development of additional criteria or metrics to assist in the objective evaluation of performance against the SPEP.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): This week, the field office completed a Safety Evaluation Report (SER) that approves a revision to the WETF safety basis. The approval letter states that the proposed revision “constitutes an interim [safety basis] revision sufficient to enable restart of the WETF with the interim goal of inventory reduction of legacy radioactive material at risk.” Accordingly, the SER includes a condition of approval that limits the scope of programmatic operations after startup to legacy material disposition only. The current WETF safety basis has been revised numerous times but relies on a hazard and accident analysis approved in 2002. A new safety basis has been submitted and the field office has provided many comments; however, this document has not been approved (see 5/3/13 weekly).