

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 12, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 12, 2014

DNFSB Staff Activity: A.H. Hadjian and E.M. Gibson observed field activities in support of an effort to update the probabilistic seismic hazard analysis. A.H. Hadjian also met with site personnel to discuss details associated with planned roof girder structural upgrades in the Plutonium Facility.

Continuous Improvement: On Thursday, the field office submitted to the NNSA Acting Associate Administrator a Safety Culture Sustainment Plan for the Los Alamos Site (see 7/25/14 weekly). The submittal combined separate plans from both the field office and LANL proposing safety culture sustainment tools to be approved by the Programmatic Secretarial Office with concurrence from the Chief of Defense Nuclear Safety. The submittal noted that LANL linked its safety culture process to the Voluntary Protection Program and will share common safety culture sustainment tools. Field office identified focus areas include: communications, employee involvement, inadequate staffing levels, and feedback and improvement. LANL identified focus areas include: leadership, organizational learning for performance improvement, and employee engagement.

Plutonium Facility–Readiness Activities: On Monday, program personnel commenced the management self-assessment for the Americium Recovery Project (see 8/8/2014 weekly).

Last Friday, the field office formally provided comments to LANL management regarding the Plan of Action (POA) for the T-Base 2 machining activity. This activity will be the first readiness assessment associated with the resumption process and consists of a single glovebox containing equipment used to machine plutonium metal. The field office directed LANL to: (1) expand the scope to include all safety management programs, (2) perform actual procedural evolutions using surrogate material or use of a cold line, and (3) recommended the POA include a review of Vital Safety System Assessments and System Health Reporting to ensure any previously identified issues have been tracked to closure. The revised POA is due by September 15, 2014. Program personnel currently anticipate commencing their management self-assessment later this month.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility–Readiness Activities: On Monday, LANL commenced their contractor readiness assessment for gas transfer operations (see 9/5/14 weekly). On Friday, facility management declared a Potential Inadequacy of the Safety Analysis after a readiness assessment team member from the Savannah River Site identified that the lower flammability limit for mixtures of hydrogen in air is reduced when argon is also present. The safety basis allows the use of argon for glovebox work. As an immediate action, management prohibited the use of argon.

Confinement Vessel Disposition (CVD) Project: CVD personnel continue the deliberate and methodical cleanout of the first confinement vessel of this project. On Monday, the Site Representatives observed the successful completion of the first bag-out of waste material from the CVD glovebox to an attached waste drum.