

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 19, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 19, 2014

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): On Friday, a LANL review team concluded the Contractor Readiness Assessment (CRA) of WETF operations (see 8/22/14 weekly). The stated purpose of the CRA was to provide a confirmatory review of WETF readiness to commence gas transfer operations in order to maintain facility safety/operability and to disposition legacy nuclear material-at-risk. This CRA followed the completion of two management self-assessments and an independent Red Team Review. During Friday's outbrief, the team noted that they had identified 19 prestart and 15 post-start findings representing weaknesses in WETF readiness. Notable findings include:

- Facility personnel were not effective in demonstrating the ability to properly plan, conduct, or respond to off-normal conditions during performance of an emergency exercise
- Facility component labeling nomenclature is inconsistent in the field and may compromise personnel and facility safety
- Operators failed to demonstrate procedure performance proficiency
- Technical issues and inaccuracies were identified in several procedures
- Management has not evaluated open issues (e.g., non-conformances, repair work orders, performance improvement action, etc.) for potential impact to facility and gas transfer operations
- Workers exhibited complacency with radiological control practices during the performance of procedures and the emergency exercise

The review team noted facility performance was insufficient to ensure gas transfer and associated operations could be safely and compliantly performed within WETF. Specifically, operational readiness was not demonstrated in the areas of management systems and safety culture, facility and equipment readiness, and conduct of operations. Additionally, the team noted that the findings and observations identified during the CRA indicate that additional work is required to achieve necessary standards of operational excellence.

Transuranic Waste Storage Facility Project: Project personnel commenced site ground preparation activities this week.

Plutonium Facility–Readiness Activities: On Thursday, facility management suspended the management self-assessment for the Americium Recovery Project after significant procedure and labeling issues were identified. Program personnel completed preparations for the management self-assessment on the T-Base 2 machining activity, which is planned to commence next week. Of note, program personnel acknowledged that modern criticality safety evaluation documents that fully comply with DOE Standard 3007 will not be completed to support the management self-assessments for either of the above startup activities. The current goal is to have these modern evaluations with any associated changes to equipment, postings, and procedures in place prior to the start of the CRAs.