

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 27, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending February 27, 2015

DNFSB Staff Activity: T.L. Hunt was on site this week to observe the conduct of a self-assessment of the local NNSA facility representative program and to discuss staffing plans with Field Office management. R.K. Verhaagen observed a meeting of the seismic expert panel focused on LANL's Plutonium Facility in San Francisco during February 22–23, 2015.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF)–Restart Activities: WETF personnel continue to work through corrective actions to address findings from the September 2014 contractor readiness assessment (CRA) and to prepare for facility restart and follow-on readiness activities (see 9/19/14 weekly). Notably, the acting Principal Associate Director for Operations (PADOPS) is holding weekly meetings with involved senior lab management, facility management, and program management to discuss the status of corrective actions necessary to prepare for the re-performance of a full scope CRA scheduled to start the week of March 16, 2015. These meetings aim to ensure the schedule is upheld and to ensure resources are being employed to address emerging issues. The PADOPS will also chair a Management Review Board designed to have all Safety Management Program owners attest to the readiness of their individual programs prior to commencing the CRA.

On Monday, WETF implemented a completely revised Facility Radiation Protection Requirements (FRPR) document to address several CRA findings. The implementation followed training that included a required reading, a mandatory short demonstration, and a second required reading following revisions stimulated by discussion during the demonstration. Notably, the new FRPR includes more stringent personal protective equipment requirements for all activities in the facility. Accordingly, implementation of the FRPR has resulted in the need to modify numerous facility operating procedures that personnel will have to exercise to ensure proficiency prior to restart.

WETF management recently released the report from a causal analysis performed to address the numerous issues encountered during the September 2014 contractor readiness assessment. The causal analysis team evaluated results of the contractor readiness assessment as well as two reports issued by the NNSA facility representative relating to readiness and conduct of operations. The causal analysis team concluded in their report that improvements were needed in management expectations and performance standards, event investigations to prevent recurrence, management monitoring, and operator proficiency and performance. The causal analysis noted that the current CRA corrective action plan addresses both individual issues identified during the CRA as well as the overarching issues identified in the report.

Management: The PADOPS recently reinvigorated the format of the weekly Executive Management Risk Review meetings to include more in-depth discussions on the LANL Director's top priorities. For example, this week's meeting included about a half hour of detailed discussion, largely led by the Director, on the progress and impediments to WETF restart. Future recurring topics of interest to the Board include Plutonium Facility restart activities, nuclear criticality safety stability, Plutonium Strategy execution, nitrate salt recovery, RANT shipping facility capability, and wild land fire management.