

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 26, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending June 26, 2015

DNFSB Staff Activity: Z.S. Beauvais augmented the Site Representative office this week and observed portions of the federal readiness assessment (RA) for Balance of Machining activities.

Plutonium Facility–Restart Activities: On Monday, the federal RA team commenced their review of the Balance of Machining activities. Their review is expected to conclude on July 1st. Notably, in their report documenting verification of prerequisites, the Field Office included a caveat that while the actions taken and closure documentation for the contractor’s RA were adequate for commencing the federal RA, the plan and execution were not currently adequate to approve operations and would be carried forward as a manageable pre-start. The Field Office report states that numerous and widespread concerns with the post-start corrective actions contributed to this decision, such as actions not addressing causal factors and superficial extent-of-condition reviews. Separately, the management self-assessment team completed their review of the Pit Flowsheet activity. The contractor plans to conduct their RA at the end of August.

Area G–Nitrate Salts: On Thursday, the Field Office directed LANL to consider the profusion of New Information relative to the safety basis for continued safe storage of the remediated nitrate salts contained in the DOE Accident Investigation Board and the Technical Assistance Team reports on the radiological release at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. In particular, the Field Office stated that these sources provide information suggesting that an accident of a different type occurred and with a greater airborne respirable release fraction than assumed in the existing safety basis. These changes have the potential to increase significantly the consequences and therefore may warrant additional compensatory measures. The Field Office requested LANL’s evaluation and any subsequent safety basis changes for approval within 60 days.

Emergency Management: Last Thursday, LANL personnel conducted an exercise utilizing their alternate Emergency Operations Center (EOC). LANL’s alternate EOC is a mobile capability that they can establish at any road accessible location. In last week’s exercise, they setup the EOC in one of three pre-determined locations in the town site.

Work Control: This week, the Associate Director for Nuclear and High Hazard Operations (ADNHHO) issued a memorandum to all facility operations directors (FOD) outlining expectations for necessary improvements in the formality of work operations. This direction follows a number of recent incidents relating to poor work control practices, the most recent of which involved an event last Monday where a maintenance worker contacted and subsequently brought down a 13.8 kV powerline with his dump truck. Following this incident, LANL management paused all maintenance work activities for a one day safety stand-down. Areas specifically identified by the ADNHHO for needed improvement include: (1) oversight and control of work execution; (2) person-in-charge responsibilities for the validation, coordination, execution and proper closeout of the activity; and (3) pre-job briefings to ensure workers clearly understand their scope of work and associated hazards prior to commencing work. The memorandum reiterates the roles and responsibilities of all levels of management for the safe accomplishment of work, and includes additional expectations for the FODs when reviewing work documents and subsequently releasing work.