

## DNFSB opening statement, LANL Director Thom Mason

November 16, 2022, in Santa Fe

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board Public Hearing

Good afternoon. I'm Thom Mason, the director of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

First, I'd like to thank the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for hosting this meeting and those in the audience who have taken time to attend. I'm happy to be here with you to discuss our Laboratory's commitment to safely delivering on our plutonium pit mission objectives.

I would also like to thank the DNFSB for their continuous oversight of our activities. The Board's role is essential across the Department of Energy complex. I also want to thank our resident DNFSB inspectors, David Gutowski and Adam Boussouf, with whom we have a great relationship and a shared commitment to transparency.

A focus of today's meeting is PF-4, which is the Laboratory's plutonium manufacturing facility. This is the only facility of its kind on the continent. It has been the nation's Plutonium Center of Excellence for research and development since 2008, of which we are rightfully very proud. It's also one of the safest buildings in the world.

The nation has entrusted us with a lot of funding to modernize this facility for our plutonium pit mission, which will take old pits out of the nuclear stockpile, consolidate them, and turn them into new components to serve our on-call stockpile in case it's ever needed. This will actually *reduce* the number of pits in the stockpile, something I think we can all agree is a step in the right direction for the nation.

Like all of you, I hope our nation never has to use its nuclear weapons. But I also sleep easier knowing that we have a robust deterrent enabled by a team of very smart, hard-working people at the Lab who are committed to maintaining a reliable stockpile. We have shown, and will continue to show, that Los Alamos is the right place to lead pit production in support of our nation's security. We are the only ones in the country that can do this work, and, as I said before, we are proud to do it.

Executing that work safely and securely to achieve our assigned mission means improving the infrastructure of our plutonium facility. This is why we have focused our attention on improving our safety systems, such as fire suppression, confinement doors, alarm systems, and glove boxes.

Additionally, as our workforce grows, we're investing significant time and energy to fully train newcomers and ensure conduct of operations remains at the heart of our Lab's culture. I'm confident we're moving in the right direction as we ramp up operations.

Finally, I would like to add that Los Alamos employees are also members of this community. We don't only live in Los Alamos. In fact, most of our workforce lives outside of Los Alamos County, including in Santa Fe County. I live just 10 minutes away from where we are meeting today, and I, just like you, care about how our work impacts the environment, our health, and our safety.

We welcome the opportunity to answer the Board's questions and to share with you our confidence in our ability to do the work that Congress has tasked us with.

Thank you again for having me.