

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 11, 2025

TO: Technical Director
FROM: Los Alamos Site Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending April 11, 2025

Plutonium Facility–Readiness: The NNSA Field Office authorized the start-up of aqueous nitrate operations in the Plutonium Facility following approval of the corrective action plan from the federal readiness assessment (see 3/8/2024, 1/10/2025 reports). A resident inspector observed Triad personnel commence operations under a startup plan with a management oversight team.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: On Monday, Triad submitted to the NNSA Field Office a request to remove provisions in the documented safety analysis related to preventing fire protection water ingress into gloveboxes, potentially causing increased moderation of fissile material (see 3/21/2014 and 1/19/2024 reports). The contractor implemented the controls in late 2015 due to the criticality safety evaluation documents for several gloveboxes not properly accounting for ingress of fire water into the glovebox. Triad recently completed the evaluations needed to show the gloveboxes are safe from being moderated by fire water during evaluated events.

Plutonium Facility–Fire Protection: Last Wednesday, during flow meter testing of one of the safety-class electric firewater pumps, facility personnel smelled an unexpected odor. The workers halted the testing, secured the pump, and started investigating the source. They identified charred insulation and an oxidized termination in one of the electrical panels that supplies power to the electric pump. The pump is currently out of service while repairs to the power supply are being completed. The other three safety-class pumps and the fire suppression system supporting the Plutonium Facility remain operable.

Transuranic Waste Facility–Operations: On Wednesday, Triad workers were moving transuranic waste drums with a forklift when a drum slid off a pallet and fell several inches onto the concrete slab. No workers were injured by the falling drum. The workers performed an initial assessment, including a radiological survey and visual inspection, which found minor scuffing but no apparent damage. The workers did not report the incident to the operations center and proceeded to transfer the drum to the RANT Facility. Workers at RANT learned of the incident prior to unloading the drum and made appropriate notifications. Facility management performed a formal inspection, which did not identify any integrity concerns. Surveys determined no radiological or volatile organic compound leakage had occurred. Facility management will reinforce the requirement to report all incidents to the operations center. In addition, facility personnel will review the waste drum movement process to determine if temporary straps are needed and allowed. This incident has similarities to an N3B event at Area G last July, where a waste drum fell several inches onto the floor from a pallet loaded on a forklift (see 7/19/2024 report).

Fire Protection: On Monday, the NNSA Field Office provided limited approval of the 2024 Baseline Needs Assessment for Fire Protection and Emergency Response. The limited approval was largely based on the cooperative agreement stakeholders not having finalized staffing numbers required by the Los Alamos Fire Department to respond to laboratory events.