

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 18, 2025

TO: Technical Director
FROM: Los Alamos Site Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending July 18, 2025

Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF): On Wednesday, while workers were size-reducing a glovebox inside the Glovebox Enclosure at WCRRF, a continuous air monitor alarmed above the suspension limits in the radiological work permit. The workers paused and exited the enclosure. There was no evidence of personnel contamination during exit surveys, but one worker had positive nasal swabs. Bioassay is in progress to determine whether any uptake occurred. All of the workers were wearing respirators; however, one of the filters of the unit being worn by the individual with positive swabs appeared improperly seated upon examination after the event. This is the second potential uptake since size-reduction activities started at WCRRF (see 6/27/2025 report).

Plutonium Facility–Work Control: Last week, workers bored a two-inch hole through a confinement boundary wall in order to place a new electrical conduit. The hole was fully sealed approximately five hours later following completion of planned work activities. Later, operations personnel discovered they had not entered the limiting conditions for operation required for planned work during which a confinement boundary is breached. Facility management performed an initial investigation, which determined this was a violation of the technical safety requirements. They also determined that the work scope had been appropriately planned; however, miscommunication with operations center personnel on the day of the task led to operations center staff believing the penetration would occur in an adjacent wall that is not a confinement boundary. Management later confirmed cascading ventilation flow had been maintained, and no contamination spread occurred. Facility management is performing a causal analysis to determine corrective actions needed to prevent this type of incident in the future.

Plutonium Facility–Glovebox Safety: Last Thursday, while preparing material in a glovebox for processing, a worker cut their glovebox glove with a pair of scissors. The worker promptly identified the small breach, notified his coworkers, and remained in the gloves for a response from radiological control technicians. The responders confirmed approximately 1,000 dpm alpha contamination on the worker's personal protective equipment glove, but there was no skin contamination or wound, and nasal swabs for the worker had no detectable activity. During the subsequent fact-finding meeting, Triad staff determined that overgloves were procedurally required but were not used, and the specific scissors used were not included in the sharps review. Furthermore, Triad staff identified potential issues with handoffs between multiple procedures during related work activities. Triad is currently assessing corrective actions in response to management's concern regarding the recent glovebox glove breaches.

Sigma Facility–Fire: Workers were cutting a depleted uranium alloy with a bandsaw when a fire involving the uranium chips occurred. The workers were able to extinguish the fire using a combination of fire extinguishers and water. The Los Alamos Fire Department responded and will perform a routine fire investigation. No injuries occurred, and impacts were limited to the bandsaw and cleanup of the expended fire suppression agents.