

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 10, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative
SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending July 10, 1998

Staff member Larry Zull was on site Monday through Thursday assisting with site representative duties. Mr. Ogg was on leave Monday. DOE-RL and most non-bargaining unit personnel had Friday off.

A. Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS): On July 2, the TWRS Plant Review Committee recommended that a Unreviewed Safety Question (USQ) be declared for Tank 101-AX. On April 2, Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. (LMHC) reported that retained gas samples from 101-AX indicated higher flammable gas concentrations than previously estimated, and the USQ Determination process was initiated. LMHC established additional flammable gas controls for 101-AX in April, and after further study, have determined that a formal change to the TWRS Technical Safety Requirements will be required to incorporate the controls into the Authorization Basis.

B. TWRS Privatization: DOE-RL plans to submit their recommendation regarding the TWRS Privatization Contract to Congress on July 20. Congress has stated that it would need 30 days to review the recommendation before the contract is signed - a Tri-Party Agreement commitment due July 31. DOE-RL is negotiating with the regulators regarding the due date.

C. Investigation of Building 324 Tritium Release: On June 30, DOE-RL issued its investigation report on the release of tritium from Building 324 without stack monitoring. During April 14-17, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) researchers operated a plasma arc furnace to demonstrate the feasibility of treating nuclear weapons components in the furnace. Because of a concern that data from the stack tritium monitor could be used to deduce classified information about nuclear weapons, the PNNL researcher, with the concurrence of facility management and the DOE-RL program manager, decided to turn off the tritium monitor during the component treatment. This action was taken without the proper approval within DOE-RL and without the concurrence of the Washington State Department of Health.

The investigation found weaknesses in the management of state permits, in contacting appropriate authorities concerning important project decisions and in managing access to classified information. The site representative office will observe and review the development of corrective actions to address the findings.

cc: Board members