

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 4, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for the Two Weeks Ending December 4, 1998

Staff members Steven Stokes and Tim Hunt were on site this week assisting with site representative duties and observing the Plutonium Finishing Plant Operational Readiness Review.

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): On November 30, DOE commenced its Operational Readiness Review (ORR) for thermal stabilization operations at PFP. To date, the ORR team has identified no major issues that might preclude restart. Mr. Hunt observed a cold run operation intended for the ORR team, but that was not observed by any ORR team member. After this omission was pointed out to the ORR team leader, the plant reformed the evolution in the presence of the ORR team. The team expects to complete field work December 4 and hold a close-out meeting next week.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): Several indicators within the SNFP continue to show little improvement in project management and conduct of engineering, and little progress in resolution of differences between DOE expectations and SNFP performance. Specific examples include:

- The project has met roughly 50% (7 of 13) of the milestones committed to by the project director during the Board's site visit in August 1998.
- Due to continuing confusion about the status of Cold Vacuum Drying (CVD) facility design and its effect on the safety documentation, the CVD Phase II SAR remains unapproved three months after its scheduled approval date. This has caused delays in equipment procurement.
- More than fifteen months after the identification of a potential leakage path through K Basin drain valves, project personnel and DOE-RL are still unable to agree upon a technical solution.

C. Meeting with Contractor Management: On December 2, Mr. Ogg and Mr. Stokes met with Mr. Ron Hanson, President of Fluor Daniel Hanford, and senior contractor management for introductions and a discussion of several technical issues. The most significant of the technical issues was the need to aggressively pursue the stabilization of plutonium bearing materials at the PFP and the importance of the upcoming revision to the 94-1 implementation plan. Mr. Hanson also expressed a desire to brief the staff and the Board regarding the recent quality improvement initiative and its implementation via existing integrated safety management initiatives. A similar introductory meeting was held with Ms. Linda Bauer, DOE-RL and Mr. Mike Hughes of Bechtel Hanford, Inc.

D. Hanford Manager Retiring: On December 2, John Wagoner, Manager of DOE-RL, announced that he will be retiring effective January 1999. James Hall, Manager of the DOE-Oak Ridge Operation Office, will be acting Manager at DOE-RL until a permanent Manager is identified.

cc: Board members