

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 7, 2003

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. Grover and M. Sautman, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending February 7, 2003

Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): A Site Alert was declared this week following the activation of multiple radiological air monitors in the K-East Basin. During the response to the initial alarm for three alpha monitors, it was discovered that the alarms were caused by the incorrectly labeled filter paper being installed backwards. This caused the detector to alarm at the low levels associated with radon emissions. Response actions for these alarms also led to additional alarms due to malfunctions caused by personnel errors. During the event and the recovery, facility personnel treated all alarms and indications as real and accurate until proven otherwise. This led to an interruption in recovery efforts when the indicated airborne levels necessitated a higher level of personal protective equipment. This conservatism was also evidenced by the incident command post which declared the Site Alert and instituted protective measures until the malfunctions were verified. Fluor Hanford also conducted a well run and detailed critique of the event. (III-A)

Waste Treatment Plant (WTP): The Site Rep observed the Phase I/II Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS) Verification for the WTP, which began this week. Potential issues address quality assurance and corrective actions. The Site Rep observed good discussions at ISM meetings addressing incorrect transfers between facilities, emergency elution of the cesium ion exchange column, and a tank modification to address hydrogen generation. However, the Site Rep continues to be concerned with some of the justifications that Bechtel National is using for eliminating safety criteria or reducing their specificity. (I-C)

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): As part of the recovery actions for the criticality nonconformance, a visual inspection of tank D-8 was being performed Friday to determine the depth of liquid remaining on the sloped tank bottom and verify the agitator is working.

PFP has spent months preparing to ship the first cans of plutonium to the Savannah River Site (SRS) this year. This week, Department of Energy (DOE)-Headquarters told the Richland (RL) office that shipments to SRS were on hold until disposition issues could be resolved. As a result, DOE-RL is revisiting plans for an alternative plutonium storage facility at Hanford so that the decommissioning of PFP can continue. In addition, DOE's FY2004 budget eliminates funding for the Material Identification and Surveillance (MIS) Program although the DOE-STD-3013 standard requires that oxides be represented in this program. (III-A)

Tank Farms: This week it was identified that the annulus Continuous Air Monitor (CAM) sampling lines for tanks AP-101 and AP-103 had been incorrectly reversed so that they monitored the wrong tank. This safety class system is 1 of 2 redundant systems for detecting leaks in the tank annuli. The investigation is still in progress, but may have resulted from a design error in the 1999 upgrade package or a subsequent labeling error. (I-C)

cc: Board Members