

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Timothy Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: Jonathan Plaue, DNFSB Site Representative
SUBJECT: LLNL Activity Report for Week Ending October 16, 2009

Livermore Site Office: The report from the self-assessment on Livermore Site Office (LSO) oversight of Radioactive and Hazardous Waste Management (RHWM) activities (see weekly reported dated July 24, 2009) was signed on October 1, 2009. Weaknesses identified in the report include the following: (1) a need for more direct observation of work conducted in the facilities, (2) an inadequate level of rigor appropriate to oversight of nuclear facilities, (3) line management's expectations for oversight were not appropriate for nuclear facilities, and (4) LSO approved a safety basis without fully understanding the risks associated with all of the operations in the facility. Three observations were also identified in the report involving: (1) a need to track and trend oversight data, including updating LSO procedures to reflect roles and responsibilities for this function, (2) a need for more frequent and visible presence in the facilities, as well as increased focus on oversight of operations, and (3) a need for line management to ensure that issues raised by staff are properly resolved by the laboratory. Formal corrective actions are expected to be developed in the next few weeks. In the interim, LSO presence in the RHWM nuclear facilities has increased.

Management: Organizational changes to the management structure of the Nuclear Materials Technology Program were announced on October 2, 2009. In general, these changes establish a lead individual for key functional areas (e.g., Operations and Engineering, Conduct of Operations, Configuration Management, etc) covering both the Superblock and the RHWM nuclear facilities. Another key change is the establishment of a single facility manager for the RHWM nuclear facilities. Personnel have been selected for most of the positions, including a new manager for the Plutonium Facility who is expected to begin duties this December. One important position that still awaits a hiring selection is the Training Manager.

On July 8, 2009, the Department of Energy (DOE) appointed a Type A Accident Investigation Board to investigate the June 26, 2009, vehicle fatality accident that occurred in a laboratory parking lot. The report from this effort was released on October 1, 2009. The conclusions and judgments of need generally center on improving various aspects of vehicle safety at the laboratory, as well as across the DOE complex. However, one conclusion, and its associated judgments of need, is applicable to the nuclear facilities. It involves the need for the laboratory to develop procedures to preserve and ensure appropriate transition of an emergency event location to an accident investigation readiness team. There is an associated judgment of need for LSO to revise its existing procedures and practices for these same accident scene preservation functions.