

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 31, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending July 31, 2015

DNFSB Staff Activity: Deputy Technical Director R.E. Tontodonato augmented the Site Representative office.

Emergency Management: This week, LANL hosted their annual HAZMAT Challenge. New for this year, LANL organizers added event stations in the Center for Emergency Planning and Analysis (CEPA) facility, in addition to stations at the Technical Area 49 training grounds. The CEPA is a large, high-bay facility that houses a system of movable walls supported by a wire grid structure beneath monitoring platforms. This arrangement allows organizers to replicate various facility environments for emergency response and protective force training. Organizers used the CEPA for stations associated with responses to scenarios involving radiological materials, hazardous chemicals, and biological agents. Notably, organizers designed the stations to minimize simulation and fully utilize actual response protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, and detection gear. Challenge participants included two teams from Los Alamos County, the auxiliary LANL team, the city of Santa Fe, Sandia National Laboratories, the National Guard, and several other entities from around the region.

Waste Characterization Reduction Repackaging Facility: On Thursday, LANL resubmitted to the NNSA Field Office the annual update to the safety basis. The new submission corrects issues with the October 2014 submittal regarding the hazards associated with nitrate salts and other oxidizers.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF)–Restart Activities: On Monday, a contractor readiness assessment (CRA) team commenced their review of WETF operations. The team is evaluating WETF readiness to commence gas transfer operations in order to maintain facility safety/operability and to disposition legacy nuclear material-at-risk. This CRA is a reperformance of a CRA conducted last September that determined facility performance was insufficient to ensure gas transfer and associated operations could be safely and compliantly performed (see 9/19/2014 weekly). This week, the CRA team observed facility personnel simulating gas transfer operations, conducted interviews and performed document reviews. The assessment is scheduled to conclude next week.

WETF–Safety Systems: On Tuesday, during surveillances WETF personnel observed degraded performance associated with two safety systems requiring entry into their associated technical safety requirement (TSR) action statements. In the first instance, a fire riser pressure gauge was oscillating above and below the TSR required limit, with the average of the oscillation below the limit. Operators took appropriate actions and stationed a fire watch. During investigation into the cause of the oscillations, WETF personnel noted that the three-way gauge isolation valve was incorrectly installed. Maintenance personnel replaced the gauge and the valve and satisfactorily retested the system on Thursday. In the second instance, operators observed a tritium monitor indicating higher than expected tritium levels that failed a subsequent performance test. Again, operators took appropriate actions and later replaced the tritium monitor and retested it satisfactorily.