

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 16, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending October 16, 2015

DNFSB Staff Activity: M. W. Dunlevy was on site to perform familiarization activities, including facility walkdowns and meetings with senior Field Office and LANL management, as he assumes duties as the Board's staff cognizant engineer for LANL.

Area G–Safety Basis: On Thursday, LANL submitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval, a temporary modification to the Area G technical safety requirements (TSR). This temporary modification was developed to allow certain activities to proceed while the facility is in WARM STANDBY mode due to exceeding composite source term material-at-risk limits (see 5/8/15 weekly). The proposed activities are in direct support of improving the safety posture in Area G while LANL personnel resolve multiple outstanding potential inadequacies of the safety analysis conditions and other issues related to remediated nitrate salt wastes, composite source term, and uncertainties in actual material-at-risk values. Proposed activities include: (1) sampling and non-destructive assay of the unremediated nitrate salts currently stored in the Dome 231 Permacon; (2) performing real-time radiography and sampling drums containing cemented inorganic wastes; and (3) doublepacking transuranic waste containers found to exceed 80 Pu-239 equivalent curies. Of note, this temporary modification will more formally implement the relief from the TSRs provided by the Field Office in July of this year (see 7/24/15 weekly).

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: Facility personnel identified an incorrect criticality safety posting (CSP) was being used to move a waste drum through multiple fissile material operations. During a fact finding of the event, operators noted that at some point during transfer of the drum between activities the correct CSP was misplaced. Operators then completed the activity using a different CSP that was printed out, readily accessible, and had a title similar to the activity being performed without properly verifying it was the correct CSP. Issues identified during the fact finding were noted to be very similar to those that resulted in a similar event earlier this year (see 5/22/15 weekly). Facility management identified the need to develop corrective actions that will improve the process for ensuring operators verify the correct CSP is used when performing fissile material operations. Additionally, corrective actions taken in response to the previous event will be re-examined.

Plutonium Facility–Restart Activities: On Thursday, LANL submitted the Pit Flow Sheet contractor readiness assessment causal analysis and corrective action plan report to the NNSA Field Office. The Pit Flow Sheet federal readiness assessment team was on site this week to conduct a pre-visit for their assessment scheduled to commence November 9, 2015.

RANT Shipping Facility–Safety Basis: On Thursday, NNSA Field Office and LANL personnel conducted a video teleconference with the Board to provide a periodic update on the status of open issues identified with the RANT Shipping Facility safety basis communicated to the NNSA Administrator in a Board letter dated December 9, 2014. The site personnel briefed the Board on planned seismic upgrades to the facility and committed to develop a new compliant safety basis that incorporates the facility modifications and resolves the Board's concerns. The facility remains in COLD STANDBY mode until such time as the new safety basis can be approved and implemented.