

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 16, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 16, 2016

DNFSB Staff Activity: On Thursday, B.K. Caleca, M.W. Dunlevy, T.J. Dwyer, and A.H. Hadjian conducted a video teleconference with NNSA and LANL contractor personnel to discuss details of planned seismic analyses and testing for the Plutonium Facility. Going forward, NNSA and LANL personnel intend to conduct monthly meetings with the Board's staff to present their plans for and progress on developing the request for proposal for the alternate seismic analysis of the Plutonium Facility.

Confinement Vessel Disposition (CVD) Project: On Monday, CVD operators paused work when they noticed a tear in the glovebox glove being used by one of the workers. The workers were in the process of attaching the sphere to the workstation when the tear in the glove was observed. With direction of the radiological controls technician, workers covered the glove tear with tape and continued working to place the sphere/workstation into a safe configuration. Upon exiting the gloves, contamination was detected on both inner protective gloves of the worker. After additional inspection, workers identified tears in both glovebox gloves. During a fact finding of the event, LANL personnel discussed whether the appropriate actions were taken to continue work with a known glove tear. The Site Representatives note that this is the second time in two weeks (see 9/2/16 weekly) that operators have had to make decisions balancing the risk between the safety of the sphere configuration and the required response to a breach of the confinement boundary.

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: On Tuesday, Plutonium Facility operators placed the facility into Mode 1–Operations following repairs and successful post maintenance testing of the previously out of service diesel firewater pump (see 8/26/2016 weekly). On Wednesday, facility operators had to enter a Limiting Condition for Operations when the tank level indicator for the other pump house malfunctioned. Facility personnel restored the level indicator to service prior to the 12 hour Completion Time that would have required them to suspend molten plutonium operations.

Area G–Safety Basis: On Tuesday, Area G safety basis personnel determined that the Potential Inadequacy of the Safety Analysis for several Flanged Tritium Waste Containers potentially pressurized with an explosive mixture of hydrogen isotopes and oxygen (see 9/9/16 weekly) represents a positive Unreviewed Safety Question. Management continues to prohibit all access to the containers while an Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation is being developed.

Area G–Inappropriately Remediated Nitrate Salts (RNS): Last week, LANL submitted to the NNSA Field Office an approved Contractor Readiness Assessment (CRA) Plan of Action for de-nesting, refrigerating, and loading RNS waste drums onto a transportation vehicle for shipment to the Waste Characterization, Reduction and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF) for treatment. This follows the NNSA Field Office Manager's approval of an amendment to LANL's Quarter 4 Fiscal Year 2016 Startup Notification Report authorizing a Federal Readiness Assessment for RNS treatment activities at WCRRF and directing a CRA for the Area G RNS activities.