

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 23, 2007

TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: R. Todd Davis/Donald Owen, Oak Ridge Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Activity Report for Week Ending March 23, 2007

A. Small Uranium Fire - Update. On Monday, BWXT started their investigation of the small fire during a chip handling task for a Quality Evaluation operation that occurred last Thursday in the Assembly/Disassembly Building. The team leader noted to the site rep. that he intends to brief results of the investigation to Y-12 management next week. During a critique of the event by line management (see item C. below), it was determined that the chip handling task that includes transfer of chips from a can into a chip transport dolly outside the glovebox was not adequately covered by procedure or addressed by activity-level hazard analysis.

Similar chip handling activities involving chip exposure to air and the chips not being wetted remain suspended and under evaluation. Initial bioassay data for potentially affected personnel are expected to be available next week.

B. Oxide Conversion Facility. Oxide Conversion Facility (OCF) operations remain suspended since the October 2006 event where a small amount of hydrogen fluoride (HF) was released from primary confinement. In December 2006, YSO approved a Justification for Continued Operations (JCO) to allow BWXT to conduct HF purging prior to completion of several expired surveillances (see the 12/29/06 site rep. report). BWXT also completed their investigation of the HF release event in early-January. Since that time, procedure changes and some maintenance activities have been completed to support purging, but delays have occurred due to emergent and other extended maintenance activities.

This week, BWXT began the HF purge in accordance with the JCO; however, a high pressure alarm was received and the activity was suspended. BWXT is reviewing this issue and will likely submit a revision to the JCO to allow the purge activity to continue. Once the purge activity is completed, safety basis surveillances and other maintenance tasks are planned. OCF operations are now expected to be resumed in late-April.

C. Feedback and Improvement. While the BWXT (independent) investigation of the chip fire noted above started this week, Assembly/Disassembly Building line management had scheduled their critique of the event for Monday. The initial critique, however, was encumbered by the inordinately large number of attendees, many of whom were not involved in the fire or events leading to the fire. This inhibited discussion between the work crew and the critique leadership. Additionally, the critique was largely focused on the fire event and the follow-on response actions, but not on the operations leading up to the fire. The site rep. discussed these observations with senior BWXT management who subsequently called for the critique to be reconvened with a much smaller group of involved personnel and with a focus on the operations leading up to the fire.

cc
Board Members