

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 24, 2002

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director  
J. J. McConnell, Deputy Technical Director  
**FROM:** R. T. Davis/ T. D. Burns  
**SUBJECT:** SRS Report for Week Ending May 24, 2002

**SRS Management:** On Thursday, NNSA announced that they have requested the Secretary of Energy to reassign Greg Rudy, manager of the Savannah River Operations Office, to become the NNSA Associate Administrator for Facilities and Operations. Charles Hansen, currently the deputy manager at SRS, will be the acting manager at SRS.

**HLW Staff Review:** Staff members J. Contardi, D. Ogg, and R. Tontodonato were on-site Monday through Wednesday to review the HLW clean-up acceleration initiatives and preparations for the upcoming Am/Cm transfer. Discussions with both DOE and WSRC personnel indicated that the site vision for accelerated HLW disposition will require favorable regulatory determinations in several key areas in addition to increased near-term funding to achieve the full life-cycle cost and schedule benefits envisioned. While recognizing the risk-reduction and tank space benefits associated with near-term direct disposition of low-curie salt, the staff highlighted the need for a thorough assessment of potential operational and worker safety impacts prior to processing low-curie material in the Saltstone facility. Additionally, the staff continued to emphasize the prudence of maintaining efforts to minimize the technical risk of the CSSX cesium removal process while pursuing alternate cesium removal capabilities.

With regard to the upcoming Am/Cm transfer, site personnel presented their strategy for minimizing the likelihood of spurious alarms that would result in a transfer interruption and the subsequent redirection of Am/Cm solution to an alternate tank. The staff indicated that overall the approach appears reasonable, but noted that excessive relaxation of certain alarm response times is not warranted and needs to be addressed. The Am/Cm transfer is currently scheduled for mid-December, with cold-run tests commencing late next month.

**HEU Blend Down:** As part of the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Blend Down Project, WSRC plans to ship low enriched uranium to a TVA vendor, Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS), for further processing. A new building will be constructed at NFS to receive the LEU, provide lag storage and blend capability. Construction of this building was scheduled to begin in early July 2002. However, it appears that the Environmental Assessment for the facility will likely slip as much as 7 weeks. This delay will impact facility construction and may prevent LEU shipments from beginning in Spring 2003.

WSRC currently estimates that HEU storage space will be full in March 2003 (i.e., LEU shipments need to begin by then). Additional tank space in H-Area could be used to extend canyon processing through June 2003. WSRC is also evaluating other options that would allow H-Canyon to continue processing material should LEU shipments be further delayed. One option is to reduce Mark 16/22 dissolving, which produces a significant amount of HEU. However, this option could impact meeting the Recommendation 1994-1/2000-1 milestone for completing the Mark 16/22 mission. DOE and WSRC will continue to monitor the progress at NFS and develop contingencies for canyon processing should LEU shipments be delayed.