

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 28, 2012

TO: T. J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: M. T. Sautman and D. L. Burnfield, Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Weekly Report for Week Ending September 28, 2012

Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Budget: Facing FY13 budget shortfalls as high as \$175 million and much smaller carryovers, SRNS announced they will be dramatically reducing staff augmentation support and construction forces very soon. SRNS is also extending the voluntary separation program by another week. These actions will likely strain some organizations (e.g., emergency planning, procedure writing) that are facing a significant loss of key personnel or staff augmentation. SRNS and DOE have indicated that their priorities including keeping H-Canyon operating (albeit at a slower pace), funding some 235-F risk reduction activities, and SRS Enterprise initiatives. SRNS also announced they are considering plant closures for three entire, upcoming holiday weeks where workers would be required to use vacation leave or take time off without pay. SRR also announced their launch of a voluntary separation program.

H-Canyon: SRNS initiated Phase II of the Sodium Reactor Experiment (SRE) used fuel campaign. The SRNS senior supervisory watch (SSW) recognized two issues during cask receipt at H-Canyon. First, the operators initially implemented the transient combustible specific administrative control (SAC) without the latest immediate procedure change (IPC). The computer server did not contain a scan of the IPC approved six weeks beforehand and both the first line manager and operator assumed the other had verified they were using the latest version. Second, the operators were a bit unsure of how many wood pound equivalents to assign to an extension cord that was present until the SSW suggested they contact a fire protection engineer. Both the facility and operations manager told the site rep about some potential training and procedure fixes to improve the implementation of this SAC, which has been problematic (see 10/1/10 and 8/3/12 reports).

L-Basin: The site rep observed SRNL personnel conduct visual inspections and ultrasonic testing (UT) of oversized cans containing reactive metal fuel. Where space permits, a camera and an ultrasound transducer are lowered down the four corners of the cans to look for thinning of the outer can. These oversized cans are only about a decade old and are in contact with the L-Basin water, whose chemistry is tightly controlled. They are the final barrier if one of the inner cans failed. Inspections of the first five cans have not detected any thinning on the vertical strips examined nor have they detected the presence of sludge layers at the bottom, which could occur if the bottom of an inner can failed. That being said, the UT has been unable to provide any data on the condition of the ~50-year old cans inside, many of which are very corroded and some of which are known to have failed, or of the fuel itself. The integrity of these inner cans is what is relied upon to prevent the reactive metal fuel from contacting the water and degrading.

F/H Laboratory: A Site Services employee trying to locate the control room crossed through a posted contamination area (CA) barricade and entered the CA without having Radiological Worker training, a thermoluminescent dosimeter, or anti-contamination clothing. Another worker spotted him and sent for Radiological Control. No contamination was found on the individual. Although all site workers are provided annual radiological protection training regarding entry requirements, this is the third case where a Site Services employee violated these entry requirements in F/H Laboratory.