

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 24, 2025

TO: R. T. Davis, Acting Technical Director
FROM: E. Freeman, D. Gutowski, and J. Kemp, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending January 24, 2025

Staff Activity: A staff team was on site this week reviewing documents related to device response methodology for subcritical experiments at the Nevada National Security Site.

Plutonium Facility – Operations: Facility management is working to improve usage of the internal trolley system. Over the past several years, there have been numerous instances where errors in trolley operation resulted in damage to the system needing repair. Overloading the trolley buckets was a contributor to some of the most recent events involving a new bucket design that started being installed last year. Ideas to improve trolley usage include updating the procedure for trolley movements, ensuring users are aware of different trolley configuration options so that operations personnel can modify the trolley as needed, and additional training on trolley operations and the new bucket configuration.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): A resident inspector accompanied Triad management on a routine safety walkdown in Wing 9 of CMR. Walkdown participants identified several areas accumulating chemical and radiological items from continuing efforts to clean out the facility. One example was bagged radiological material staged in a fume hood marked “Out of Service”. Another was a cart containing containers of radioactive material as well as containers with excess liquid chemicals, some of which were unlabeled or leaking. Triad management documented these observations and plan to work with waste management personnel to resolve them.

Site Operations: The Los Alamos National Laboratory has recently experienced extremely low temperatures leading to several pipe bursts throughout the laboratory. There were no significant impacts to defense nuclear facilities. Triad staff are taking necessary steps to repair any damage.

Radioactive Liquid Waste – Work Control: There have been two work control issues involving hazardous energy control in the radioactive liquid waste facilities. Last Thursday, electricians opened an electrical panel and moved wires out of the way without the proper personal protective equipment or lockout. The workers were not aware that they exceeded their scope under the controls in use. This Wednesday, subcontractor workers did not isolate an abandoned low-level waste transfer line from the work location as instructed by the work procedure when performing work on a flange. The work involved opening a flange and inserting a blank flange and gasket. On Thursday a fact finding was performed and determined the energy isolation procedure was not followed as required. It was determined that no risks to the workers or the environment were present. The site is issuing lessons-learned documents for both events.