

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 21, 2025

TO: Technical Director
FROM: Los Alamos Site Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending February 21, 2025

Emergency Preparedness: On Tuesday, Triad personnel held a tabletop emergency preparedness drill at Technical Area 55 (TA-55). The scenario was a spill of nitric acid out of a tank and its protective berm in TA-55. A key aspect of this activity was for the participants to evaluate the scenario in light of the increased resident population of TA-55. Participants identified that sheltering in place was a safer response to this event than the default approach of evacuating all residents.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): Early Thursday, Triad personnel removed a glovebox from TA-55 and delivered it to CMR for staging. This is the first in a series of gloveboxes to be staged inside of the CMR facility as authorized by the existing safety basis. Triad is planning to use this glovebox for studies related to improving the glovebox decommissioning process and other efforts.

Last week, the resident inspectors walked down CMR's Wing 9 with a Triad worker to observe corrective actions resulting from a recent Triad management walkdown (see 1/24/2025 report). The previously identified bagged radioactive material was no longer staged in the fume hood, which is back in service. While proper disposal of excess chemicals remains a challenge, and most are still present, they are no longer comingled with containers of radioactive material. Overall housekeeping was also improved compared to the day of the walkdown.

Plutonium Facility–Operations: This week resident inspectors performed an oversight observation of an activity occurring inside of a glovebox. The observation focused on whether the activity was performed in accordance with the procedure and nuclear safety requirements. The resident inspectors had minor observations related to improving procedural steps, which were discussed with the workers and provided to management. The resident inspectors also observed a positive example of workers appropriately pausing work and consulting with subject matter experts when an equipment issue arose.

Plutonium Facility–Readiness: On Wednesday, the NNSA field office authorized the start of operations to harvest heat source plutonium from source material provided by Idaho National Laboratory. The field office based the authorization on closure of the pre-start findings identified during the contractor and federal readiness assessments. The pre-start findings had identified issues related to training of personnel, inconsistencies between the safety basis and emergency planning hazards assessment (EPHA), identification of hazards in procedures, conduct of operations, and the startup plan (see 9/6/2024 report). Triad resolved the findings by providing additional training to affected personnel and updating the necessary documents and operations procedures including revisions to the facility safety analysis the EPHA and startup plan needed to provide consistency and address the hazards.