

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 2, 2025

TO: Technical Director
FROM: Los Alamos Site Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending May 2, 2025

Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC): A team completed the contractor readiness assessment (CRA) for the planned venting of FTWCs stored at Area G. The CRA resulted in six pre-start findings that mostly pertained to procedural, qualification, and calibration issues. These pre-start findings included issues identified by the personnel performing the work, as well as issues identified by the CRA team during the review. Triad and N3B personnel are working on addressing these findings. The planned federal readiness assessment is still expected to begin the week of May 12th.

Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF)–Operations: Triad received approval on April 17th from the NNSA Field Office to begin glovebox size reduction operations at WCRRF (see 4/18/2025 report). However, last week, workers found unexpected liquid when they opened the outer container for the first glovebox received at WCRRF to be size reduced. Facility staff paused work and conducted further investigation. They determined the liquid was water condensation originating from the wood cribbing used to secure the load. They are updating the receipt procedure to account for the possibility of condensation and are investigating whether cribbing materials can be modified to reduce condensation. Based on initial surveys, the contamination inside the glovebox is estimated to be high enough to warrant spraying a fixative material inside to reduce airborne radiological hazards. Once this work is completed, the size reduction activities will continue. A resident inspector was present at WCRRF this week to observe pre-job preparations and to inspect the glovebox currently staged in the glovebox enclosure.

Plutonium Facility–Radiological Control: Last Thursday, there was a contamination spread in a heat source plutonium laboratory room, resulting in multiple workers with contamination on their personal protective equipment and one worker with detectable skin contamination. The spread occurred during glovebox glove changes. This was expected to be a radiologically challenging activity, and the job required respiratory protection and radiological control technician support. A likely contributor to this event was high humidity in the glovebox, leading to seepage of contaminated condensation into the gloveport assemblies. One of the dryers supporting glovebox ventilation has been out of service for several months. Facility management is working to ensure those repairs are completed in an expedited fashion to prevent further contamination migration.

Area G–Material Characterization: The resident inspectors observed the characterization of a standard waste box containing a corrugated metal pipe segment using the high-energy real-time radiography capability at Area G during a walkdown of the site. N3B completed refurbishment of this system earlier this year. They have been using this device for characterization to support the shipment of several hundred waste containers to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant but are placing hold tags on these containers until all authorizations for full use of the system are in place. Triad also has several hundred waste containers that need to use this system to complete characterization prior to shipment.