

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 7, 2025

TO: Technical Director
FROM: Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: SNL Report for October 2025

Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) Staff Interactions: The Board's staff conducted no onsite activities at SNL in October 2025.

National Technology and Engineering Solutions of Sandia, LLC (NTESS) Startup and Restart Procedure Approval: On October 20, 2025, the Sandia Field Office (SFO) approved the update of NTESS procedure, *Implementing the Startup and Restart Process for Nuclear Facilities, Operations, and Activities*. SFO noted the revision incorporates changes based on Department of Energy Order 425.1E, *Verification of Readiness to Start Up or Restart Nuclear Facilities*, including the frequency of Startup Notification Report (SNR) submittals and durations for routine operations. Based on an evaluation of the revisions, SFO requested a meeting to clarify implementation details within 60 days and required NTESS to implement the approved procedure within 90 days.

Auxiliary Hot Cell Facility (AHCF) Basis for Interim Operations (BIO) and Technical Safety Requirements (TSR) Annual Update: On October 20, 2025, SFO approved the proposed changes to the AHCF safety basis documents in the 2025 annual update via a safety evaluation report addendum. The AHCF annual update was based on the results of screening 34 unreviewed safety question determinations (USQD) and potential inadequacy of the safety analysis (PISA) entry forms from January 25, 2024, through January 24, 2025, of which four USQDs resulted in a change to the BIO and one resulted in a change to the TSR. The change to the TSR addressed SNL laboratory policy system requirements in the procedure, *Implementing the Unreviewed Safety Question (USQ) Process for Nuclear Facilities* and added this document to the list of references. SFO concluded that the updated AHCF BIO and TSR continue to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection to the workers, the public, and the environment from the identified hazards and meet the requirements specified in 10 CFR 830, Subpart B, *Safety Basis Requirements*. SFO directed NTESS to implement the annual update within 120 days.

First Quarter Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 SNR: On October 17, 2025, SFO approved the first quarter FY 2026 SNR submitted by NTESS on October 7, 2025. In the SNR submission, NTESS noted that no activities were evaluated by the Readiness Level Determination team for entry conditions of the readiness level determination process during the previous quarter. In the approval correspondence, SFO evaluated the NTESS *FY 2026 Quarter 1 Facility Routine Activities* list and identified one activity scheduled to be performed in October 2025. SFO requested notification when this activity has been completed. The SNR for the first quarter of FY 2026 identified no new readiness activities planned for the next twelve months.

Annular Core Research Reactor (ACRR) PISA: On October 22, 2025, NTESS declared a PISA after the discovery of an unanalyzed condition (argon backfill gas) during disassembly of an unirradiated spare ACRR fuel element. The ACRR manager promptly issued a Facility Operational Restrictions directive placing and maintaining the facility in a safe condition. The ACRR manager also notified SFO. ACRR staff members are conducting a USQD.