

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 24, 2026

Los Alamos National Laboratory Resident Inspectors Activity Report for Week Ending April 24, 2026

Staff Activity: The DNFSB cognizant engineer for Los Alamos National Laboratory was on site this week. While present, he walked down the Plutonium Facility, met with Triad leadership on Plutonium Facility infrastructure upgrades, and attended a work-control meeting.

Plutonium Facility–Radiological Control: Two weeks ago on night shift, there was a contamination spread in a corridor due to a breach in a low-level waste (LLW) bag containing material from equipment removal activities in a laboratory room. Several workers had contamination on their personal protective equipment and a trail of brown, sticky material from the bag was present in the corridor. The waste, which consisted primarily of cut piping, had been taped and triple-bagged, with the outside of the bags reading no detectable activity prior to being moved outside of the laboratory room. There were many similarities between this event and a previous LLW contamination spread last year (see 5/9/2025 report). That event led to the contractor issuing a standing order that defines requirements for bagging and handling LLW. The order requires triple-bagging or use of thick 12-mil bags for heavy items or sharp items such as cut piping. Triad personnel are evaluating whether these precautions are adequate given triple-bagged waste had a breach with a significant contamination spread. Any new LLW handling requirements will be incorporated into a revised standing order and then the waste handling procedure.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: Triad issued a plan providing guidelines for implementation of the newly approved DOE-STD-3009-2014 safety basis for the Plutonium Facility. The plan provides a three-phase approach for implementation over the course of approximately a year. Phase 1 is the accelerated implementation of glovebox surveillances (see 3/6/2026 report). Phase 2 will address minor wording changes to the Technical Safety Requirements. Phase 3 covers the more complicated aspects of the new safety basis, such as new controls, substantial changes, or areas with significant interfaces.

Fire Protection: In a recent letter, the NNSA Field Office directed the contractor, Triad, to not use the 2025 edition of the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) standard 801, *Standard for Fire Protection for Facilities Handling Radioactive Materials*. The direction was based on a recommendation letter sent from the NNSA cognizant secretarial officer for safety to the site. The NNSA letter expressed concerns that changes to the NFPA standard require all pyrophoric materials to be stored and handled in an inert atmosphere and would greatly increase the burden associated with existing processes that the NNSA believes have a long record of being performed safely using current practices. The restricted use of the standard is directed to remain in place until a thorough evaluation can be performed and appropriate guidance can be issued by NNSA.