

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 18, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: R.K. Verhaagen and J.W. Plaue
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending December 18, 2015

DNFSB Staff Activity: R. L. Jackson was onsite to plan oversight activities associated with Plutonium Infrastructure Strategy. Accordingly, he met with key project staff and walked down the Plutonium Facility, the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building, and the Radiological Laboratory Utility Office Building (RLUOB).

Plutonium Infrastructure Strategy: Late last month, the Deputy Secretary of Energy approved a restructuring of the subprojects covered under the CMR Replacement project. There are now four subprojects: (1) RLUOB Equipment Installation, Phase 2; (2) Plutonium Facility Equipment Installation, Phase 1; (3) Plutonium Facility Equipment Installation, Phase 2; and (4) Re-categorizing the RLUOB to Hazard Category 3 with a material-at-risk limit of 400 g plutonium-239 equivalent. The first two subprojects enable LANL to cease programmatic activities in the CMR by 2019, while the latter two subprojects primarily support the increased capacity required for larger pit manufacturing rates. The memo requests an updated project execution plan within 90 days and indicates approval authority will remain with the DOE Deputy Secretary for subprojects 2–4 and with the NNSA Administrator for subproject 1.

In a separate action, the DOE Deputy Secretary also approved the mission need Critical Decision (CD)-0 for the Plutonium Modular Approach project. This project addresses life extension needs for the existing Plutonium Facility in support of Department of Defense requirements and Congressional Direction. The CD-0 schedule range for project completion is December 2025 to December 2027.

Transuranic Waste Management–Restart Activities: On Thursday, LANL transmitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval an amendment to the quarterly site-wide startup notification report (SNR). LANL amended the SNR primarily to request a scope change to the approved readiness assessment for treatment of remediated nitrate salt waste drums. In a previous approval letter, the NNSA Field Office directed LANL to conduct a federal readiness assessment for this activity. This recent amendment proposes combining the treatment of both remediated and unremediated nitrate salt waste drums into one startup activity and to perform only a contractor readiness assessment.

Plutonium Facility–Restart Activities: On Thursday, the Associate Director for Nuclear and High Hazard Operations submitted to the NNSA Field Office a request for Startup Authorization Authority approval to commence Pit Flow Sheet (PFS) operations in the Plutonium Facility. The request also included the PFS federal readiness assessment corrective action plan for approval and the PFS federal readiness assessment pre-start closure package for adequacy verification. If approved, the PFS activity will be the fourth operation Plutonium Facility personnel have successfully resumed through the formal readiness process this calendar year. Four additional operations are scheduled to go through the formal readiness process next calendar year. Successful resumption of these activities will represent a complete restart of the Plutonium Facility operations paused by the Laboratory Director in June 2013.