

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 23, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending February 23, 2018

DNFSB Activity. Acting Chairman Hamilton and staff members Herrera and Migliorini visited the laboratory on Wednesday and Thursday. They received briefings on improvements to the emergency management program; safety posture and conduct of operations at the Plutonium Facility; and activities at the NNSA and EM Field Offices. They also walked-down multiple facilities, including the Plutonium Facility.

Safety Basis. On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office formally requested that the LANL contractor develop a strategy including milestones and the resources required to upgrade the safety bases to achieve compliance with DOE-STD-3009-2014 for the Plutonium Facility, Transuranic Waste Facility, RANT Shipping Facility, and Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility. This represents a positive step toward developing high quality safety bases and implementing previous contract requirements (see 10/14/2016 weekly) in advance of the upcoming change in LANL contractors.

Plutonium Facility–Restart Activities. On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office Manager approved startup authorization for electrorefining operations. His approval comes after a line management review team completed their assessment and briefed him on the adequacy of actions taken to resolve the pre-start findings and the actions planned for the post-start findings (see 12/15/2017 weekly).

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure. During final tie-in of the new Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) last weekend (see 2/16/2018 weekly), one programmable logic controller and two communications links supporting the facility control system did not return to service following testing. Facility personnel entered the limiting condition for operation for the criticality alarm system due to inoperability of the UPS. They replaced the communications links and are using a redundant programmable logic controller. On Thursday, they successfully completed a two-hour load test and declared the new UPS to be operable.

Plutonium Facility–Radiological Safety. On Tuesday, a glovebox worker detected contamination on their personal protective gloves upon exiting the glovebox gloves. Radiological control technicians reported 73,000 dpm alpha contamination on the individual's finger. Decontamination efforts were successful and nasal smears were negative. At the fact-finding, participants noted the need to develop a tool to eliminate a potential latent sharp associated with a scouring pad.

Waste Characterization Reduction Repackaging Facility (WCRRF). Last week, workers observed water dripping from the glovebox bag off stub. A radiological control technician determined the water was contaminated and found contamination on the protective clothing of two glovebox workers. All personnel successfully cleared contamination monitors following doffing. As a corrective action, WCRRF management has eliminated water misting to control dust during bagging operations as it appears the water is collecting. This is consistent with practice at the Plutonium Facility.