

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 27, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: S.A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending April 27, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: A.R. Powers supported the on-site office this week.

Federal Oversight: The NNSA Field Office Deputy Manager for Technical Operations recently reinforced expectations for field presence from his management and staff. The initiative is intended to drive participation in their enhanced oversight of conduct of operations in the Plutonium Facility, as well as increase overall operational awareness at the other nuclear facilities. Their goal for enhanced oversight is to execute each week: one proactive review by a subject matter expert, one review of a conduct of operations element by a Facility Representative, and one evaluation of the contractor's management observation program. They have begun tracking against these goals.

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: The engineering manager reported that current fiscal year efforts on the Project Execution Strategy are either on track or ahead of schedule (see 1/5/2018 report). A key deliverable for this fiscal year is the completion of seismic structural evaluations for four gloveboxes and development of an overall schedule for analysis of the remaining gloveboxes. Engineering personnel have completed three evaluations and are attempting to use a more efficient methodology for the fourth that will inform development of the overall schedule. This is important because currently more than 270 gloveboxes require seismic analysis.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: On Wednesday, LANL management briefed the NNSA Field Office on the status of their conduct of operations improvement plan. They reported to be on schedule for most actions with several key training and mentoring initiatives coming due in the next few months. On Thursday, NNSA Field Office personnel met with LANL managers to discuss the results of their enhanced oversight effort for the month of April. On the positive side, they noted an excellent effort to collect worker identified issues as part of the pause of pit operations (see 3/30/2018 report). Among the weaknesses, they emphasized the need to strengthen processes and execution of the plan of the day to ensure work de-confliction and cognizance of operations. LANL managers noted that they have recently embarked on an effort to improve their scheduling and integration in an effort to increase productivity and this effort should have benefits for the plan of the day.

Waste Characterization Reduction and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF): WCRRF personnel completed the clean out and removal of programmatic equipment from the waste repackaging glovebox, shipped the resulting drums to Area G, and placed the facility into COLD STANDBY mode. Notably, WCRRF managers initiated a knowledge capture effort with key personnel ahead of the workforce dispersing as part of the pending transition to the new contractor for the EM Field Office. NNSA will retain ownership of WCRRF. They are currently working with LANL personnel to determine the future of the facility. While the facility has known deficiencies, it is the sole capability at LANL for repackaging transuranic waste with hazard category 2 amounts of nuclear materials.

Area G: N3B-Los Alamos, the new contractor for the EM Field Office, is poised to assume control of Area G operations on Monday.