

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 24, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending August 24, 2018

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: On Saturday, a worker replacing degraded braided wire cable for a glovebox door counterbalance received a skin contamination due to a glovebox glove breach. The skin was not damaged and was successfully decontaminated. There is a substantial effort to replace these cables in plutonium-238 gloveboxes; one cable failed during use earlier this year. The sharps review process had not been used for this work package. During recent construction activities, workers received permission to cut a lock on a position controller for the Zone 1 ventilation system because the key could not be found. Following a cut, they accidentally dropped the bolt cutters, which impacted a glovebox window. The window cracked, but contamination surveys indicated it was not breached. Workers replaced the window later in the day.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: In July, facility personnel removed two of the safety-significant fissionable material transport carts from service after the carts failed their in-service inspections. Last week, facility personnel observed that one of these carts was still in use and loaded with nuclear material. They removed the material and properly removed the cart from service. Previously, the cart had not been physically controlled and de-posted when it was originally taken out of service. Facility management is evaluating corrective actions.

Last Thursday, workers opened a legacy container in a glovebox where the criticality safety posting required a watertight container for the form and quantity of plutonium present. Once the outer container was opened, this requirement was no longer met. The work team initially opened the container in a hood then started a move to a glovebox due to surface contamination levels. On the path to this glovebox, they opened the container in a different glovebox to get a surveillance photograph. The team recognized the error and reported it after they completed the moves to the planned destination glovebox where the criticality safety posting would have allowed them to open the container.

Plutonium Facility–Operations: Plutonium-238 operations personnel continue to develop a work package to investigate the container that was observed to generate a smoke/dust phenomenon earlier this month (see 8/10/2018 report). This activity is important to validate the previously completed extent-of-condition review given it was guided by limited information on the container contents.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility–Safety Basis: Earlier this month, the LANL contractor submitted to the NNSA Field Office a safety basis strategy. The strategy notes the facility is currently operating with two documented safety analyses, three technical safety requirement documents, and an evaluation of the safety of the situation, with three of these documents of 2016 vintage. The strategy further notes that the 2017 safety basis annual update consolidated most of these documents, but has not been approved by the NNSA Field Office. As such, the LANL contractor proposed consolidating using the 2018 annual update with a scheduled delivery date of September 28, 2018.

Contract Transition: On Monday, LANS and Triad management held an all-hands meeting to update the workforce on the transition, including additional details on the planned organizational structure. The expected transition date remains November 1, 2018.