

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 31, 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 31, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: M. McCoy, P.J. Migliorini, F. Sutherland, and M.T. Wright conducted a review of the proposed new safety basis for Area G and also walked down the facility.

Area G—Readiness: Subsequent to feedback from the DOE Headquarters subject matter expert on readiness, N3B managers convened their Joint Evaluation Team on Monday to reconsider the level of readiness required to restart Mobile Loading Unit operations (see 8/3/2018 report). In particular, the team further considered that mobile loading operations were last performed at Area G in 2013, thereby triggering the need for a federal readiness review. Given the low complexity of the activity, the team proposed conducting the review using a checklist approach.

Area G—Operations: On Monday, N3B personnel conducted a learning team to review the response that occurred last week after a worker observed potential concerns with the integrity of a waste container. Ultimately, N3B personnel determined that the container was not compromised; however, the learning team identified several weaknesses in the response. In particular, the response was delayed because the industrial hygiene technician did not have unexpired calibration check gas and had incomplete training and qualification elements related to both facility access and proficiency on the gas monitoring instrument. The learning team raised further questions associated with the appropriateness of the available instrumentation to detect all of the potential constituents of concern known to be present within the waste container population, the control of calibration gases, and the need to ensure a waste specialist is included as part of the response to the discovery of potentially compromised containers. More broadly, N3B managers questioned whether additional actions were needed to ensure the workforce was properly trained and equipped to support all elements of facility operations.

On Tuesday, the necessity of the above mentioned corrective actions was reinforced after an operator spotted a corroded drum that appeared to be leaking liquid. Monitoring indicated no radiological release; however, a review of the drum contents indicated the potential presence of a chemical that could not be detected with the available equipment. Consequently, facility management called in the LANL hazardous materials team, who overpacked the drum.

RANT Shipping Facility: On Tuesday, the NNSA Field Office responded to the latest proposed startup notification report (see 8/10/2018 report). The field office concurred with the need to perform a federal readiness review to restart RANT operations, but directed the LANL contractor to maintain the projected startup date as December 14, 2018, noting that the proposed date of September 1, 2019, was too distant.

Plutonium Facility—Infrastructure: Facility personnel recently restored the operability of one of the pumps serving the wet vacuum system that is used to transfer solutions in the facility. This action allowed programmatic operations personnel to move some aqueous waste solutions enabling the replacement of degraded valves that are needed to cement these solutions in the near future.