

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 14, 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 September 14, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: L. Schleicher was on site to observe paleoseismic trenching activities supporting the effort to update the seismic hazard analysis. B. Weathers was on site for resident inspector training for assignment at another DOE site.

Plutonium Facility–Accident Investigation: On Wednesday, programmatic management directed all operations personnel to conduct an extent of condition review for sharps/shards. The need for the review was based on preliminary information from the team investigation indicating that a sharps/shards review may not have been performed for all operations that include this potential hazard. As such, all glovebox and other operations associated with contaminated environments will not be conducted until a sharps/shards screening is conducted and appropriate controls identified. Management requested documentation of initial actions completed and subsequent plans by November 2, 2018. Similar actions were taken after previous puncture wound incidents (see 9/7/2007 and 12/5/2008 reports).

Plutonium Facility–Operations: This week, Plutonium Facility personnel stabilized accumulated plutonium-containing waste solutions through the aqueous nitrate cement fixation process. They conducted this process as a safe and stable operation under a senior supervisory watch since aqueous nitrate operations have not operated for about five years and have not completed formal readiness reviews. Of note, the revised procedure that governs the safe and stable exception to formal readiness reviews remains in approval.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility–Safety Basis: On Tuesday, the NNSA Field Office approved the updated Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation (ESS) for Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC) loaded with AL-M1 containers (see 6/22/2018 report). The revised ESS addresses ignition of potential flammable atmospheres in AL-M1 containers not stored in FTWCs and concludes that there are no credible internal or external ignition sources for the atmosphere within the AL-M1 and that pressure monitoring and venting activities can resume.

Last month, the LANL contractor submitted to the NNSA Field Office a safety basis addendum to support moving and venting the FTWCs. Once approved and implemented, the addendum will supersede the ESS discussed above. The addendum includes two new specific administrative controls related to lift height limitations and a lookout during lifting.

Transuranic Waste Facility–Safety Basis: The NNSA Field Office approved a safety basis addendum related to the safety-class seismic power cutoff switch. The addendum supports the redesign of this system which is currently unable to meet one of its original performance criteria.

Area G–Readiness: N3B personnel performed a management self-assessment to support restart of Mobile Loading Unit Operations (see 8/31/2018 report). The assessment included a drill on the response to high winds. Formal readiness reviews are planned for the end of the month.