

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 2, 2019

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Alexander Velazquez-Lozada, Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for July 2019

DNFSB Staff Activity: R.G. Quirk provided onsite oversight during the week of July 8th.

Conduct of Operation. Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP), reported a Technical Safety Requirement (TSR) violation after failing to comply with a safety hazard control that requires the waste shaft access doors to be closed before downloading waste. This control is implemented to prevent vehicles, equipment, and/or loads from inadvertently entering, dropping down into the open waste shaft, and impacting waste containers. The Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) identifies this event as having moderate radiological consequences to the public. The work supervisor immediately notified the Central Monitoring Room Operator of the apparent TSR violation. As part of near-term corrective actions, NWP briefed workers on hoist conveyance movement during waste downloading activities and potential changes to the procedures to improve communication. NWP subsequently revised the waste downloading procedure to require communications between the waste handler and the hoist operator prior to downloads.

Waste Management. NWP started readiness review activities for restarting TRUPACT-III (TP-III) shipping package activities. This month NWP completed development of the Plan of Action (POA) for the Contractor Readiness Assessment (CRA), and performed the associated management self-assessment. The activities to be evaluated under the associated CRA are the receipt and unloading of CH waste delivered to WIPP in TP-III containers. NWP determined, and Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) concurred, that the download and emplacement of the standard large box 2 waste containers (SLB2) that are transported in TP-III containers are considered part of normal CH waste handling. These activities have been performed safely since the restart of CH waste handling, and therefore are outside of the scope of this readiness activity.

The POA notes the TP-III receipt and surface handling operations have not been performed since the events of February 2014. NWP plans to conduct the CRA for this activity in August and receive the first TP-IIIs in September.

Underground Ventilation. As reported in the May and June 2019 monthly reports, NWP continues to evaluate and take steps for the potential restart of the 700 series fans. NWP proposed a revision to the DSA and TSR to test the 700 series fans. The submitted DSA/TSR change permits testing of all the associated equipment on the surface to ensure correct performance. A second proposed change to the DSA/TSR will permit extended operation of the complete unfiltered exhaust system when not actively downloading or emplacing waste.