

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 1, 2020

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: M. T. Sautman and Z. C. McCabe, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Activity Report for Week Ending May 1, 2020

COVID-19: SRS has 13 confirmed positive cases. SRNS requested approval to postpone emergency preparedness drills and exercises through July 31 due to the COVID-19 response. SRNS also requested extending Emergency Response Organization qualifications similarly.

Much of the focus this week was aligning Savannah River Site Recovery Plan – Return to Normal Operations with the draft guidance from DOE-EM, the Office of Personnel Management memo, and the Opening Up America Again guidelines. One of the key challenges has been trying to match up the required gating criteria with available state and regional public health data, especially since the health departments collect and present their data differently. This can make the data for Georgia, South Carolina, local counties, and amongst SRS employees sometimes exhibit differences that prevent meaningful comparisons. Moving averages are often needed to smooth out daily fluctuations (for example, some data dips on the weekends). In any case, DOE has not decided on any dates yet.

The resident inspectors (RI) discussed their observations on the draft plans and proposed data with DOE and SRNS personnel. DOE, SRNS and the RIs also discussed how SRNS plans to implement many of the proposed COVID-19 controls and practices. Topics discussed include the use of face coverings in contamination areas, ways to minimize cross-contamination of personnel contamination monitors and maintenance tools, and the use of plastic shields for personnel who interact with many employees. DOE, SRNS, and the RIs also discussed means to address high contact surfaces (e.g., leaving interior doors open in some tritium administrative buildings) and the use of building ventilation to help minimize infections. For example, fans will be run in office buildings continuously during the work days rather than being in automatic mode. There are no plans to stagger shifts at this time.

K-Area: The K-Area Interim Surveillance downblending optimization project has been paused since April 3 when the site entered the phase of Essential Mission Critical Operations. The project, however, was deemed essential from the onset. This week, SRNS personnel resumed field work for the project under the approved management control plan. The resident inspector called into the pre-job briefing for resuming work. The discussion of COVID-19 precautions and the scope of work were appropriate.

Tank Farms: SRR declared a Potential Inadequacy in the Safety Analysis because a seismically initiated Pulse Tube Agitator aspiration/sparging event is not documented within the safety basis.