

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 1, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director

FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors

SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending May 1, 2020

COVID-19 Impacts: Developments this week include:

- The Emergency Operation Center demobilized on Thursday from the monitoring mode they entered on March 9. COVID-19 coordination tasks will now be performed by Emergency Management Division personnel as part of their normal duties.
- The LANL Director conducted an all-managers virtual online meeting on Thursday to introduce a new institutional policy for COVID-19 risk and control measures for onsite work. The policy establishes controls for increased onsite work; however, the policy does not include prerequisite conditions or a schedule for resuming increased onsite work.
- Plutonium Facility personnel resumed additional mission critical manufacturing activities that had been paused for a regularly scheduled inventory of nuclear material.
- Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building personnel continued their second week of resumed operations in support of plutonium manufacturing.
- Triad personnel continued transuranic waste characterization and movement activities. They completed two shipments from the RANT Shipping Facility to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.
- N3B issued a standing order on Monday that defines COVID-19 expectations for performance of ongoing onsite activities.

Plutonium Facility–Training: During this period of reduced operations, Plutonium Facility personnel have continued to conduct oral review boards for a new “working person-in-charge” qualification. The board examines candidates on a variety of principals and policies associated with integrated work management and conduct of operations. Triad management has been adjusting practices and policies associated with the person-in-charge role in response to several abnormal events (see 3/22/2019, 4/19/2019, 12/6/2019 reports). On Thursday, a resident inspector observed one of the new boards and noted adequate conduct, including implementation of social distancing, and good performance by the candidate.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility: Last Saturday, the facility experienced a total loss of electrical power and facility personnel were unable to use the backup generator due to the location of the fault and equipment problems. The safety basis does not credit these systems; however, loss of power triggers certain required actions to be taken. In anticipation of an extended outage, operators took the safety basis required actions and reduced the facility mode to warm standby. On call linemen arrived, determined the issue to be a phase to phase arcing in a substation transformer primary, possibly due to an insect, and restored normal power to the facility. Facility personnel have been deliberately restoring systems during the course of the week. On Monday, they held a telephonic fact-finding to review the event. Overall, they noted an excellent off-hours response despite the COVID-19 situation. They also identified a repeat issue with the backup generator that would not have prevented this outage and the need to develop a procedure to facilitate use of a portable generator.

Management: On Thursday, Triad management announced changes to organizational reporting and personnel that transfers divisional accountability for transuranic waste management activities within the Weapons Production directorate to the Senior Director of Environment and Waste Programs.