

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 15, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director

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

SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending May 15, 2020

COVID-19 Impacts: The nuclear facilities continue with routine entry into their normal operation modes as defined in their safety bases to support programmatic work. Developments this week include:

- Positive cases at the laboratory are now at 11, including an individual confirmed this week that recently performed duties at the Plutonium Facility.
- Triad personnel completed a pilot effort for drive-up COVID-19 specimen collection and onsite analysis. They tested 49 priority workers (e.g., first responders, medical staff, and mission essential personnel) and plan to ramp up mandatory, random testing from such priority work groups in the coming weeks pending the availability of collection supplies. They are also experimenting with an alternative approach for self-collection of saliva that could substantially increase the number of weekly onsite tests.
- Triad personnel continued transuranic waste characterization and movement activities. They completed two shipments from the RANT Shipping Facility to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. They also relocated non-destructive assay equipment to the Transuranic Waste Facility and plan to begin certified measurements next week.

Safety Basis: Subsequent to a discussion with the NNSA Field Office, Triad safety basis personnel entered their New Information process on Wednesday to evaluate whether the safety basis appropriately considers hazards from an aluminum-skinned plywood trailer parked adjacent to transuranic waste containers. The trailer has an interior consisting of substantial wooden shelving used to store combustible supplies. Plutonium Facility management also engaged fire protection engineers to evaluate this condition. On Tuesday, Triad safety basis personnel entered the New Information process to evaluate whether the collapse of the canopy area at the RANT Shipping Facility is analyzed to impact transuranic waste containers.

Federal Oversight: On Wednesday, the NNSA Field Office closed the final three issues from the last biennial review conducted by NNSA's Chief of Defense Nuclear Safety (see 3/17/2017 report). Overall, they addressed 178 individual issues through the execution of 378 corrective actions. The next biennial review of the field office was planned for last month, but has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Plutonium Facility–Operations: Last Thursday, a worker dropped a container of nuclear material while passing it between gloveboxes on his fingers resulting in a bone fracture. There was no glove breach. The manual transfer was needed because the engineered material transfer system supporting these boxes is out of service. Facility management is evaluating guidance on how to manually move heavy containers in gloveboxes. They also added a note in the shift orders reminding personnel to ensure all required notifications are made for injuries, since that did not occur with this event.

Plutonium Facility–Construction Safety: Last Tuesday, an excavation subcontractor struck an electrical conduit while working on the Construction Support Facility, which is located adjacent to an outdoor waste storage pad. The subcontractor's excavation exceeded the boundary of where utility potholing had been performed. Workers immediately paused work and excavation activities remain paused for this project. Triad personnel later verified that the conduit was de-energized and believe it to be abandoned from a past security infrastructure upgrade project.