

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 23, 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 October 23, 2020

DNFSB Staff Activity: The staff held a third week of remote interactions with Triad and NNSA personnel for a review of safety systems. This week, they discussed the Electrical Distribution System, Seismic Power Shutoff System, Chlorine Gas Delivery System, and the Full Scale Test Facility at the Plutonium Facility.

Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC): An eight member team, three of whom were present onsite, commenced the federal readiness assessment for venting and handling of the FTWCs stored at Area G. Members of the team were present for mockup evolutions during the contractor readiness assessment (see 8/14/2020 report). This week, they observed additional demonstrations of FTWC movement, as well as the assembly and disassembly of the ventilation system. The team expects to complete review activities next week.

Transuranic Waste Management: N3B worked with Triad personnel to complete two shipments this week from the RANT Shipping Facility. The shipments included 28 drums and four standard waste boxes. This is the first usage of the facility by N3B and represents an important demonstration of indoor loading capability for their legacy waste inventory. Moving forward, Triad and N3B are evaluating how to combine waste shipments for optimal shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility: On Monday, a worker was struck in the back by a 15 to 20 pound plastic bag of radioactive waste that fell about 20 feet into an underground vault. The vault services an intra-facility transfer line for transuranic liquid wastes and is a permitted confined space. The incident occurred when the tape that was used to attach the bag to lifting equipment failed and the worker was standing under the load. The worker was not contaminated, but received return-to-work restrictions for the injury. On Wednesday, fact-finding participants identified the need for a number of significant corrective actions prior to resuming this activity, including: (1) ensuring the work package complied with institutional requirements for hoisting and rigging; (2) selecting an engineered solution to secure waste to the lift line; and (3) determining an effective means of communications between workers in the vault and aboveground given the personal protective equipment required for the chemical and radiological hazards. Triad personnel concluded that this event did not constitute a reportable near-miss, which DOE defines as when happenstance is the main reason the event did not result in a reportable injury.

COVID-19 Impacts: In recent weeks, the State of New Mexico and the laboratory have experienced an increase of cases. On Monday, the LANL Director issued an all-hands message reiterating the importance of following the COVID controls and the need to maximize telework practices. Notably, Triad has experienced several instances of workers arriving onsite with symptoms. They have also experienced several instances where workers in break rooms resulted in close contacts necessitating the precautionary isolation of many workers. In one example, a large number of radiation protection staff members in the Plutonium Facility were isolated. Fortunately, Triad's onsite testing resulted in a same day negative test result allowing all workers to return the next day. Triad management is reassessing break room configurations.