

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 8, 2021

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Daniel B. Bullen, Ph.D., P.E., Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) Report for December 2020

SNL Operating Status in Response to COVID-19: On December 30, 2020, the New Mexico Department of Health issued an Updated Public Health Emergency Order to impose county-by-county restrictions due to COVID-19. The order emphasized that “all New Mexicans should be staying in their homes for all but the most essential activities and services.” Since SNL is an essential business and is exempt from this order, the operating status of SNL remained unchanged during December. The Sandia Field Office (SFO) and National Technology and Engineering Solutions of Sandia, LLC (NTESS) continued to operate under Phase 2 of their return-to-site plans, which encourages maximum telework for SFO and NTESS staff members.

Management Self-Assessment (MSA) for In-Service Fuel Element Inspection Activities: During December, NTESS conducted an MSA as part of the readiness assessment for in-service fuel element inspection activities at the Annular Core Research Reactor Facility (ACRRF). The MSA included extensive document review, observation of operations, and interviews with ACRRF staff. The in-service fuel inspection activities reviewed as part of this MSA included visual examination, dimensional measurements, mass measurements, and ultrasonic testing. The MSA team completed their assessment report, which included no pre-start findings and 30 observations, on December 16, 2020. ACRRF staff will evaluate these observations as potential opportunities for improvement. The Contractor Readiness Assessment is scheduled to begin on January 19, 2021. The Federal Readiness Assessment is scheduled for April 2021.

Auxiliary Hot Cell Facility (AHCF) Spare Reactor Fuel Element Inspection and Qualification: AHCF staff continued spare reactor fuel element inspection and qualification during December. The inspection activities include visual examination, dimensional measurements, mass measurements, and helium leak detection. In early December 2020, inspection activities were paused by the closure of the AHCF due to a positive COVID-19 case. Following facility cleaning and staff quarantine, AHCF staff resumed and completed the inspections of the final crate of spare reactor fuel elements on December 17, 2020.

Emergency Management - Base Support Agreement (BSA) Update: The transition to the new BSA, which includes a number of changes that impact the SNL Emergency Management Program, continued during December 2020. Kirtland Fire and Emergency Services (KFES) assumed full responsibilities for back-up medical and technical rescue capabilities on December 1, 2020. KFES is currently assessing their hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response capabilities and will determine by January 7, 2021, if they are ready to assume full responsibility for HAZMAT responses as scheduled on January 21, 2021.