

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 24, 2023

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Boussouf and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending March 24, 2023

Staff Activity: A. Kline, one of the Board's resident inspectors at the Savannah River Site, was on site to benchmark oversight approaches. M. Bradisse and R. Eul were on site providing additional support.

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: Facility personnel continued recovery efforts from the HEPA filter cool down spray actuation last week (see 3/17/2023 report). HEPA filter housing water sampling revealed no contamination, so the plan remains to drain remaining liquid and process it through the Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility. Triad entered the New Information process to determine any safety basis implications of this event. Access to the impacted wing of the facility is controlled by a standing order issued on Monday. The standing order specifies respiratory protection for entry into laboratory rooms and a room monitor with a radio stationed outside to communicate any changes in ventilation status between entry groups and Operations Center personnel.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): On Thursday, Triad submitted a revised temporary safety basis modification for CMR to support the third phase of activities to disposition americium bearing material from an offsite location (see 12/14/2018 report). These materials have been repackaged and characterized via gas sampling, imaging, and nondestructive assay. The next step is to unpack the inner containers for processing and final disposition of the material. Based on the characterization results, personnel determined there are no additional hazards beyond the radioactive material contained in inner containers. Therefore, the revised temporary modification proposes removing previous temporary controls and completing phase three activities under the controls currently established in the existing safety basis. The new temporary mod will be closed as soon as it is approved.

Federal Oversight: The staff and resident inspectors met with Environmental Management Field Office (EM-LA) personnel to discuss improvements in their oversight processes since the Board's August 17, 2022 letter communicating the results of a complexwide review of DOE safety oversight effectiveness. Since the data collection supporting that letter, EM-LA has hired additional federal and technical assistance contractor personnel into needed positions, revised a substantial fraction of their command media, and increased their level of oversight activities. EM-LA management is working to inculcate a culture of oversight into their staff and ensure that everyone recognizes their oversight responsibilities and is effective in their activities.

Area G–Safety Basis: N3B held another workshop to support development of a modern DOE-STD-3009-2014 compliant safety basis for Area G (see 1/27/2023 report). A resident inspector and staff members accompanied one of the workshop attendees from the DOE Chief of Nuclear Safety's Office and an EM-LA staff member on a visit to Area G. The primary purpose of the visit was to observe the implementation of controls in Dome 33 that support safe storage of potentially reactive drums and high fissile gram equivalent drums.