

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 9, 2024

**TO:** Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Frank Harshman and Clinton Jones, Resident Inspectors  
**SUBJECT:** Oak Ridge Activity Report for Week Ending August 9, 2024

**Staff Activities:** B. Sharpless and S. Thangavelu traveled to Y-12 this week to observe the electrorefining (ER) operations demonstrations conducted in the Y-12 development building. CNS and DOE readiness teams arranged the demonstrations to familiarize themselves with ER operations in preparation for the ER readiness assessment. DNFSB staff and resident inspectors (RI) met with YFO personnel to discuss several aspects of the ER readiness assessments and safety strategy.

C. Stott, the Pantex RI, traveled to Oak Ridge this week. The RIs conducted walkdowns in Buildings 9204-2E, 9212, 9215, and the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility (HEUMF). The resident inspectors conducted a walkdown of the production areas observing assembly and disassembly operations as well as casting and packing operations. At Building 9215, the RIs walked down the ER area to observe progress being made towards the upcoming readiness activities and observed machining operations on the shop floor.

**YFO Oversight:** YFO issued the FY24 second Triannual Issues Management Meeting (TIMM) Report. YFO identified facility operations management performance as an emerging item of interest in the report. YFO highlighted recent examples related to poor shift routine and operating practices, lack of cognizance of facility conditions and events, and poor control of equipment and system status. CNS will be providing a formal response to the issues identified in the TIMM.

**Qualification Board:** The RI attended two final oral qualification boards for both a shift manager and a shift technical advisor. Prior to administering the final oral board, a pre-board meeting is held to present the questions to the board members for comment and awareness. Per the CNS procedure, these questions are supposed to be pulled from a pre-existing question bank comprised of questions that have been reviewed and approved by both the operations manager and the appropriate subject matter experts. During the first pre-board meeting, the RI observed questions that were presented to the board members that were recently created and had not been through the appropriate review process. After bringing the concern to both the operations manager and senior CNS management, the RI was assured these questions would be properly reviewed prior to the official board two days later. When the RI attended the oral board, the questions were unchanged and had errors in them that would have been corrected if they had been properly reviewed. During the second oral board a week later, the RI observed a board member asking leading questions that resulted in the candidate changing their answer. The RI has raised concerns about the lack of training for personnel in facility operations management prior to administering oral boards (see 3/24/2023 report). The RI also noted a lack of training department representation by CNS at oral boards in general. In the RI's opinion, the oral boards should be conducted by personnel qualified in the training process to ensure consistent testing and grading of the candidates that will be responsible for enforcing safety basis requirements in the nuclear facilities.