

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 15, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: T. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: B. Broderick and R.T. Davis
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending August 15, 2008

Broderick was off-site this week.

Plutonium Facility: On Wednesday, an operator punctured his hand while performing a stainless steel cutting operation in a glovebox. Operators and radiological control personnel took appropriate action to respond to the injury and transport the injured operator to the on-site Occupational Medical Facility. Initial wound counts were positive; however, subsequent medical efforts were able to remove a small metal sliver and significantly reduce the wound contamination.

Based on initial investigation, the Integrated Work Document (IWD) included the puncture hazard and controls were identified. In particular, the IWD required use of puncture resistant gloves for this activity. The pre-job brief included a discussion of this hazard and controls. In addition to the first line manager and other operators in the area, two members from the effectiveness evaluation team for the January 2007 contaminated puncture wound corrective actions were in the area and observing the activity. Personnel observing the activity noted that the procedure and controls (including puncture resistant gloves) were followed by the operator. This particular cutting operation with stainless steel creates a rough edge that appears to have breached the operator's glove. Based on the injury sustained by the operator, it appears that the controls identified may not be adequate.

All machining activities at the Plutonium Facility have been suspended pending causal analysis of this event. In addition, the Director has requested that a formal investigation be performed.

Radioactive Liquid Waste: The Waste Management Risk Mitigation Project (TA-50 Tank Farm), which involved construction of a new Hazard Category 2 pump house and tank facility, was intended to increase the low-activity liquid waste storage and address concerns that arose during the Cerro Grande fire. This project was halted in April 2007 at about 75% construction completion due to project management and quality assurance issues. This week, the site office approved a LANL recommendation to complete this project as a radiological facility to provide low-activity liquid storage during emergency conditions. This decision may impact plans to use the TA-50 Tank Farm for influent storage for the Radioactive Liquid Waste Treatment Facility Replacement Project.

Federal Oversight: LANL recently responded to a site office request to report on the status of staffing for readiness preparation and lessons learned from issues associated with the Interim Radiography and Remote Drum Venting readiness activities. The LANL report notes that current readiness staffing is not adequate to perform their mission and additional resources have been requested for Fiscal Year-2009. LANL is also establishing formal qualification training for Laboratory Readiness Assessment team leaders, core review team members and readiness review coordinators. The report also identifies numerous lessons learned from the Interim Radiography and Remote Drum Venting readiness activities for planning, scoping, performance and other areas (site rep weekly 7/11/08).

Plutonium Facility: On Friday, the startup authority (NA-10) approved startup of Interim Radiography at the Plutonium Facility (site rep weeklies 8/1/08, 7/11/08, 6/6/08, 5/23/08).