

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 14, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending July 14, 2006

Accident Investigations: LANL has competent teams conducting separate investigations on the RLWTF construction accident and the CMR hood fire; the investigations are expected to be done by July 28th and Aug 16th, respectively (site rep weeklies 6/30/06, 6/23/06). The former meets criteria in DOE Order 225.1A *Accident Investigations* for a federal Type B investigation; NNSA has chosen to grant an exception rather than conduct an investigation; federal oversight of the LANL investigation consists of the NNSA project manager who is responsible for the RLWTF construction project.

Federal Oversight: On June 30th, the NNSA Site Office (LASO) submitted to headquarters its implementation plan for the two-year pilot of the new oversight model. The plan reiterates the pilot's objectives and guiding principles while providing few specifics: it discusses the high reliance on the LANL contractor assurance system, the need for risk-based prioritization of federal oversight, the need to consider unique concepts for headquarters interface, and the expectation that LASO management and staff will dedicate at-least half their time to the pilot. Many key questions remain open (site rep weekly 3/17/06). In the coming weeks, LASO intends to define the oversight concept and a new organization structure to support completing implementation of the pilot by Oct 1st.

Waste Operations: Transuranic waste shipments from LANL to WIPP remain suspended, not only because of the head space gas sampling issue but also an emergent concern that internal packages in debris drums may shift and thereby permit exterior radiation levels to exceed the WIPP contact limit, 200 mrem/hr (site rep weekly 6/30/06). Limited shipments may resume for non-debris waste forms.

Pajarito Laboratory (TA-18): The Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR), Wing 9, has begun to receive and store uranyl nitrate solutions from TA-18 and is scheduled to complete receipts of both nitrate and fluoride solutions (e.g., SHEBA fuel) in September. CMR anticipates a roughly one-year campaign to convert all these solutions into oxide (site rep weekly 6/2/06).

Management: LANL is phasing out the Corrective Action Review Board (CARB) on Aug 1st, and intends to replace it with a new issue management process still under development. The CARB was established in 2005 as an independent quality check on actions intended to address the roughly 2,000 non-institutional issues found during the LANL stand-down and resumption (site rep weekly 4/8/05).

The CARB has only partially lived up to its potential. In late May, with the looming Jun 1st contract transition, the CARB reported the outcome of its reviews covering plutonium and tritium operations (i.e., NMT and ESA Divisions). The CARB observed that NMT had developed a reasonable path forward but had made insufficient progress to allow the CARB to complete its review; NMT resources were a particular concern. For tritium operations, the CARB generated comments but did not complete its review process before contract transition. Upon contract transition, NMT and ESA ceased to exist; the CARB suggested its input be passed onto the new owning divisions. The CARB is now wrapping up reviews of waste operations and the site services contractor (KSL), but these are also expected to be incomplete, similar to those for NMT and ESA. While key data is being archived and LANL management has expressed commitment to followup, their mechanism to do so is not yet apparent.