

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 18, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending October 18, 2002

Martin, Schapira, and Stevenson (OE) were here this week reviewing quality assurance.

Quality Assurance (QA): LANL is making incremental progress in improving institutional QA (site rep weeklies 8/30/02, 1/11/02, 10/19/01). For example, the Institutional Quality Management Implementation Plan has been in development for more than 5 months and, although improved, continues to be draft. The draft plan calls for a 2 year implementation schedule. Several divisions and projects need quality programs in place sooner and are putting programs in place now – independent of the institutional effort. The primary mechanism intended to coordinate the institutional effort with the divisions and projects is a policy-making Steering Group and a lower-tier Working Group. The Steering Group has met several times since the Board's last visit (7/18/02). The Working Group, charged with refining and coordinating implementation details, first met last week and still appears to lack definitive direction and assigned membership.

On the positive side, higher-tier documents to standardize procurement quality have been developed, and a computerized system is to be implemented in December. Also, some LANL divisions with nuclear facilities have established formal QA programs (NMT) or plan to do so within the next 6 months (DX, ESA). However, these efforts have not been coordinated with the institutional effort. The likelihood of disparate programs persisting in the future could be reduced if such coordination took place and if these division had representatives on the Working Group. While improving QA has senior DOE/LANL management attention, the rate of progress on the institutional program during the last year appears inconsistent with this being assigned a high priority.

Integrated Safety Management (ISM): Increased attention may be warranted to personnel complying with safety requirements (i.e., formality of operations), based on the following isolated events: (1) About 2 months ago, two technicians in one facility experienced mild electrical shocks in two separate events – one attributed to equipment failure and the other to a lock-out-tag-out failure. DOE and LANL have followed up. (2) On September 26th, two craft personnel accessed a radiography facility roof while intermittent radiography operations were being conducted and contrary to access controls. Event reconstruction and preliminary dose assessments indicate no dose was received. (3) More recently, a subcontractor damaged a gas line while modifying a non-nuclear new-construction facility. The damage was discovered later when the gas line was pressurized. (4) Also recently, one nuclear facility had a room become contaminated due to poor waste handling practices, effectively shutting down that room's operations. Occupants discovered the room was contaminated one evening, but it wasn't reported until next morning. In the interim, the room was an unposted contamination area. The site rep has discussed these events with DOE/LANL management.

Chemistry and Metallurgical Research Building (CMR): CMR has completed ventilation repairs to Wing 3 and is restoring it to normal operations. All CMR wings will then be operational. Wing 3 hoods are still out of service, but will be systematically function-checked. Individual processes will be started up after the process hazards are reviewed and readiness confirmed according to division procedures. Wing 3 will be primarily used for uranium operations.