

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 1, 2002

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending February 1, 2002

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). RFETS completed more than 120 DOE-STD-3013 containers during the month of January, a sharp increase from all prior monthly throughput for PuSPS. This week, however, the loss-on-ignition furnace heating elements failed and repair efforts are in progress. Kaiser-Hill has programmed two of the main stabilization furnaces to perform the loss-on-ignition heat-up cycle so that moisture measurement of stabilized plutonium oxide can continue. (3-A)

Work Planning. Mentoring of work planning personnel (those who develop hazard analysis, safety controls and work procedures) to improve activity-level work planning was suggested in a staff report forwarded by the Board to DOE in April 2000 as well as the DOE-RFFO annual Integrated Safety Management (ISM) update review conducted in February 2001 in accordance with DOE G 450.4-1A, *Integrated Safety Management Guide*. As reported on November 23rd, a mentoring program commitment established in April 2001 was reported as completed by Kaiser-Hill in early October. Expectations or guidance for such a mentoring program, however, had not been developed and meaningful mentoring during the course of work planning efforts was not occurring to any appreciable extent across the major nuclear facilities. Following additional site rep. inquiry on this issue with DOE-RFFO, Kaiser-Hill senior management recently issued broad expectations for mentoring of work planning personnel in the major RFETS projects. DOE-RFFO is reviewing these expectations.

The DOE-RFFO annual ISM update review also called for DOE-RFFO to enhance their oversight of activity-level work planning. Efforts toward improvement in this area have been slow. DOE-RFFO assessment plans for 2002 provided to the site rep. in early January do not include any specific assessment of activity-level work planning. DOE-RFFO management indicated in discussions with the site rep. that actions to address this DOE-RFFO oversight issue are still under development. (1-C)

Conduct of Operations/Criticality Safety. During repackaging of wet combustible residues in Building 371, a criticality control was violated that requires all fissile material, secondary waste, and visible debris from a repackaging operation (of one drum's contents) to be removed from the glovebox prior to introduction of fissile material for the next repackaging operation. After introducing the residue contents to the glovebox, workers noticed that a bag of material from a prior repackaging operation had been left in the glovebox and recognized the criticality violation problem. While noting a concern to their supervision, the workers did not clearly communicate the precise issue, nor did supervision pursue the concern sufficient to understand the issue. The repackaging then proceeded without stopping and responding, as required, to a known criticality violation. The fact that a violation had occurred was not discovered until the following day during the pre-evolutionary briefing for repackaging operations. At week's end, DOE-RFFO review of the violation and determination of corrective actions was in progress. (1-C)