

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 12, 2002

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending April 12, 2002

The site rep. was out of the office on Monday.

Recommendation 94-1/2001. DOE's Implementation Plan for Recommendations 94-1 and 2000-1 calls for the repackaging of about 106 metric tons of various plutonium residues at RFETS by May 2002. This residue processing effort, started in early 1998, is now nearing completion. Kaiser-Hill projects completing repackaging of remaining wet combustible and dry residues by mid-May. (3-A)

Wet Combustible Residue Storage. The site rep. and staff discussed with RFETS personnel the status of the ongoing RFETS program to monitor drum populations where drum vent filter corrosion has led to filter failure including plugging, almost all on wet combustible residue drums. Since late 2000 about 1300 drum vent filters have been flow tested with 23 drum vent filters having low or high flow rates and 1 drum filter with no flow. No bulging of any drums with plugged filters has ever been observed and recent laboratory testing of plugged filters indicates that hydrogen is diffusing by the filters. During the past two years, Kaiser-Hill has also been testing the use of granular activated carbon (GAC) pads in the headspace of 22 drums with a history of filter plugging. Kaiser-Hill personnel noted that the tests show that the GAC pads greatly reduce the tendency of filters to plug on these drums as no low-flow filters have been observed. The test information is to be provided to the staff. Following drum shipment preparations, including head-space gas sampling, Kaiser-Hill intends to ship these drums with the GAC pads and a new filter. RFETS personnel are working with Waste Isolation Pilot Plant personnel to reach agreement on this path forward. (3-A)

Work Planning. The RFETS Integrated Work Control Program Manual identifies several categories of work (e.g., painting, minor mechanical rework, etc.) that do not require a specific Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) during work planning. In prior revisions of the Manual, these categories had associated descriptions that sometimes provided a limitation/restriction to the scope of such work. For example, under minor mechanical rework, the description limited the scope to work on piping systems with no radiological contamination or hazardous chemicals. Site rep. review of the most recent revision of the Manual issued in late March found that these descriptions had been eliminated. Following site rep. inquiry on this issue with DOE-RFFO management, Kaiser-Hill is taking action to re-institute the descriptions. (1-C)

Safety System Damage. Kaiser-Hill externally reported that a Life Safety/Disaster Warning System speaker in Building 776 was inoperable this week. The speaker wire was found to have been cut near the speaker. Following site rep. and DOE-RFFO inquiry, a fact finding effort was conducted by Building 776 personnel. The fact finding did not determine the cause of the cut wire; however, a subcontractor work crew supervisor did state that he observed the cut wire in early March but had not reported it as he assumed the speaker was not required. (1-C)