

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 24, 2000

**TO:** K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** D. Grover and M. Sautman, Hanford Site Representatives  
**SUBJ:** Activity Report for the Week Ending November 24, 2000

Spent Nuclear Fuel Project: The contractor operational readiness review (ORR) for the cold vacuum drying facility (CVDF) concluded this week. The ORR team identified 6 pre-start findings including two dealing with procedure compliance and contamination control, issues identified in the original contractor ORR terminated on 10/20/00. Two major safety-related procedural violations that occurred during the ORR demonstrations are as follows.

- An operator was required to verify that the cask pressure cycled between 1 and 19 psig to ensure hydrogen is successfully purged from the cask. Due to an incorrect valve position the pressure gauge remained at 2 psig. The operator failed to take the procedurally required actions for this abnormal condition. The failure to complete the purge could result in a flammable concentration of hydrogen in the cask or ventilation system.
- An operator did not park the overhead crane as required by the procedure. The procedure was then signed to verify that it was properly located. Parking the crane in the proper location is a technical safety requirement administrative control that avoids damage to the processing lines during a seismic event.

It should be noted that the facility did not recognize that either violation occurred until questions were raised by an ORR team member in the first case and the site representative in the second. During a meeting with the contractor line management, the ORR team leader stated that despite these problems, the ORR would pass contingent on continued use of a senior supervisory watch (SSW) and mentors for the operations personnel. The effectiveness of this requirement is unclear as both were in effect during the ORR when these violations occurred. The pre-start findings and presence of the SSW and mentors indicate that problems previously identified by the ORR team have not been resolved, the resumption was premature, and the ORR process is being used to get ready for operations rather than evaluating readiness. (III-A)

Meeting with Deputy Manager: The Site Reps met with Paul Kruger, the Acting Deputy Manager of the Department of Energy (DOE) Richland Office. The major topic of discussion was ORR's including the continued use of ORR's to achieve readiness at Hanford, the marginal operations performance during the reviews, and the importance of DOE line management conducting a thorough review before declaring readiness to start DOE ORR's. The Site Reps also discussed concerns with the approved performance incentive for processing plutonium solutions as well as the lack of challenging scenarios during emergency preparedness drills and exercises. (III-A)

cc: Board Members