

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 30, 2001

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending March 30, 2001

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). This week, operational dry runs and glovebox window gasket changeouts were completed, and a pressure control issue in the helium gloveboxes was identified. The pressure control issue concerns an assumption in the Building 371 Basis for Interim Operation (BIO) that pressure control valves will prevent a positive pressure (relative to the room) in the gloveboxes during accidental severing of a pressurized line in the glovebox. This assumption is not assured with the current pressure control equipment and a momentary pressurization may occur. This issue is planned to be addressed in a formal BIO change to be submitted for DOE-RFFO approval early the week of April 2nd. The PuSPS Project is now planning to complete an operational demonstration for line management, declare readiness for operations, and start the Kaiser-Hill Operational Readiness Review during the week of April 2nd. (3-A)

Sitewide Corrective Actions. As previously reported, DOE-RFFO outlined certain safety issues in a January 5, 2001 letter to Kaiser-Hill resulting from a series of events and negative trends during 2000. Kaiser-Hill continues to develop the long-term corrective actions in areas such as work planning and control, supervision, conduct of operations and feedback and improvement. The overall effort, however, has been languishing in quality and pace and has appeared to lack the urgency described in a mid-January, joint DOE-RFFO/Kaiser-Hill letter to all RFETS employees. Kaiser-Hill has named Mr. Alan Parker as RFETS Chief Operating Officer and he has reported onsite. This week, DOE-RFFO management asked top Kaiser-Hill management to improve the quality and pace of the efforts to determine the corrective actions needed to address the safety issues in the January 5th letter. (1-C)

Building 371/374 Work Planning and Control. During the past few months, there have been a number of occurrences reported by Building 371/374 indicating inadequate work planning and/or work control. Problems such as liquid spills, improper valve lineup for liquid transfers, material control problems, and improper execution of glovebox removal and glovebox cleanout activities have been reported. These problems are occurring as Building 371/374 transitions to an increased level of deactivation and decontamination (D&D) activity.

In discussions with the site rep., DOE-RFFO management noted that this issue has been raised with top Kaiser-Hill management and that corrective actions are to be identified and taken. The site rep. noted that these problems bear some similarities with the work control problems observed in Building 771 in the summer of 2000. Corrective actions identified for those problems (see site rep. report of October 13, 2000) may be appropriate for applying in Building 371/374 and potentially other nuclear facilities; in particular, use of the "Technical Response Team" concept to mentor work crews on emerging work control issues, questions or unusual conditions encountered during D&D activities. (1-C)