

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 2, 1998

TO: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: P.F. Gubanc & D.G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representatives

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending January 2, 1998

Mr. Gubanc was on leave this week.

A. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): On December 30, Duke Engineering & Services, Hanford (DESH) formally responded to the "cure notice" issued by Fluor Daniel Hanford (FDH) on December 10. FDH reports that the DESH response does not contain a clear plan to address project management deficiencies, so FDH has requested a new response within two weeks. Copies of these letters will be forwarded when available.

B. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Babcock and Wilcox Hanford Company (BWHC) management continues to work on a response to the criticality safety assessment conducted by Mr. McKamy. The BWHC response is expected next week and is considered a prerequisite for readiness to resume fissile material handling at PFP.

On December 30, PFP vault operations personnel noticed a slight bulge in a can of Pu alloy being moved for inventory purposes. While the operators did their best to follow the appropriate procedures for handling a bulged can, they found that the procedures did not adequately address their specific situation. This caused a delay in establishing proper controls for the can and transporting it to a repackaging glovebox (which was eventually done without incident). BWHC and DOE-RL held a critique of this event and have issued a list of lessons learned. This list will be forwarded to DNFSB HQ when available.

C. Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS) - Tank 101-SY: On December 29, the TWRS Plant Review Committee announced the discovery of a potential Unreviewed Safety Question regarding the unexplained rise in tank 101-SY waste level. Careful monitoring of 101-SY waste level shows an increase from approximately 397 inches to just over 400 inches in the past year. Tank 101-SY is on the watch list for hydrogen gas generation, and TWRS operators continue to run the mixing pump that was installed in July 1993 for the purpose of inducing continuous slow release of hydrogen gas. TWRS engineers have not identified the cause of the rising tank level, but continue to assess potential causes and appropriate mitigative action.

cc: Board members