

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 23, 1998

TO: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

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

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending April 24, 1998

Ralph Arcaro was on-site this week conducting tours and meetings in preparation for his assignment as a Hanford Site Representative. Messrs. Gubanc and Ogg are both out of the office Friday.

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): On April 20, DOE-RL formally authorized PFP to resume Phase 1 fissile material handling (i.e., Laboratory, Vault and Solid Waste Operations). In its letter, DOE-RL cited the following planning assumptions for PFP's path forward:

1. PFP "Phase 2" operations will focus on thermal stabilization with the five installed muffle furnaces only. Vertical calciner and cementation operations are not included.
2. The revised stabilization priorities, in descending order, are: metals; solutions; polycubes; sand, slag and crucible; and other materials. (Mr. Gubanc will review the technical basis for stabilizing Pu metals before Pu solutions with PFP personnel on May 5.)
3. Stabilization of Pu solutions and operation of the Pu packaging line (DOE-STD-3013 compliant) are not expected to start until the very end of FY2000.

These plans are NOT in compliance with the approved Recom. 94-1 implementation plan and are clearly being delayed due to budgetary limitations.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): This week, DOE-RL began negotiations with its regulators regarding proposed delays and additional costs in the SNFP. DOE-RL hopes to reach agreement with the regulators on new Tri-Party Agreement milestones that, ideally, would be consistent with DOE commitments under Board Recom. 94-1. Recently, Duke Engineering & Services Hanford (DESH) has made some progress, delivering the first vacuum processing system to the 300 Area for Cold Vacuum Drying testing, and starting system testing at the Canister Storage Building. However, the project continues to experience day-for-day schedule slip due to overdue safety documentation.

On April 21, Messrs. Ogg and Arcaro reviewed the operator training plan for the SNFP. DESH has constructed a detailed, forward-looking training plan and staffing plan that will train, qualify, and certify SNFP operators in time to field a minimum safe operations crew at start up. One outstanding question, which DESH must answer, is whether K Basin fuel handlers are required by the labor contract to be journeymen - which could add about two years to the training schedule.

C. Passdown of Safety Requirements: On April 20, Fluor Daniel Hanford (FDH) presented its path forward to revise its site-level procedure development and implementation process. (See weekly letters dated 1/23, 2/27, and 3/27/98.) FDH and the subcontractor presidents have agreed, in principle, to a revised process which should be formalized by the end of May. Until implemented, all site-level procedure revisions require case-basis senior management approval for release.

cc: Board members