

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 28, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending August 28, 1998

Staff member Larry Zull was on site observing the DOE Operational Readiness Review (ORR) for Tank C-106 sluicing.

A. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): DOE-RL negotiations with EPA Region X staff were not successful in reaching a consensus on SNFP schedule and Tri-Party Agreement milestones. The next step in the dispute resolution process calls for negotiations at the next higher management level which includes the DOE-RL Deputy Manger, Lloyd Piper and Randy Smith of EPA. If an agreement cannot be reached at this level, the issue will be taken up by top-level EPA management, and will likely involve lawyers from the U.S. Department of Justice.

B. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Although Babcock and Wilcox Hanford Company (BWHC) has drafted a response to the Board's letter of July 13, 1998 concerning Pu stabilization options, DOE-RL returned the response to BWHC with significant comments. While the Board's staff finds recent efforts at PFP to re-engineer and reorganize commendable, these efforts may cause changes in some Pu material disposition pathways, and a delay in the response to the Board's letter.

Continuing difficulties in resolving questions about the PFP Safety Analysis Report, and new data that raises questions about plutonium hydride pyrophoricity, have led to further delays in the Phase II ORR schedule. DOE-RL now estimates that the contractor ORR will begin in mid-October and the DOE ORR in mid-November.

C. Facility Representative Program and Recommendation 95-2: Over the past few weeks, Mr. Ogg reviewed the DOE-RL Facility Representative (FR) Program with particular focus on effectiveness of corrective action for FR identified deficiencies. This review also provided insight to the effectiveness of the Feedback and Improvement Core Function within the DOE-RL Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS).

Mr. Ogg found that the effectiveness of corrective action is poor, as evidenced by frequent recurrent health and safety deficiencies. Additionally there is difficulty within the FR ranks in obtaining appropriate support from DOE-RL line management to prompt proper corrective action from the contractors. Senior DOE-RL management has been made aware of these problems and the Site Representatives will monitor DOE-RL and contractor efforts to make improvements.

D. Congressman Gingrich Visit: After a campaigning visit in the Tri-Cities area early this week, Congressman Newt Gingrich toured Hanford Wednesday afternoon. The site manger, John Wagoner accompanied the Congressman on a bus tour of the site.

cc: Board members