

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 11, 1998

TO: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: P.F. Gubanc, Oak Ridge Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending September 11, 1998

The office was closed Monday for the Labor Day holiday. Mr. Gubanc was on leave Tuesday. Staff members Owen and White, and outside expert Ralph West, were at Y-12 Wednesday through Friday to review Enriched Uranium Operations (EUO) Phase-A2 restart preparations.

A. Y-12 EUO Phase-A2 Restart: Some of the issues identified by the staff's review include:

1. After questioning, LMES concluded that the hydrogen branch line to the tube furnaces should be physically separated to preclude inadvertent introduction of hydrogen. A walkdown of the hydrogen system revealed that the system configuration was not isolated as described by the process engineer and that some of the installed isolation devices (e.g., blind flanges) were not under any form of administrative configuration control.
2. Periodic testing of the Holden furnace is conducted by the equipment test and inspection (ET&I) inspectors. The ET&I manager described the inspectors' training as "experience-based". Given some recent events involving ET&I, further staff review may be justified.
3. The EUO shift managers could not explain how they verify safety equipment calibrations are current before authorizing operations.

B. Y-12 Emergency Response Procedures: As discussed last week, the Plant Shift Superintendent (PSS) office is responsible for mobilizing initial emergency response. As an aid to the PSS, "quick response guides" (i.e., one-page immediate action checklists) were used until June 1998. Due to their lack of depth and pedigree, the guides were replaced by more complete, but much more lengthy, abnormal operating procedures (some are still in draft). After several discussions with the cognizant personnel on this issue, the following path forward was identified:

1. All PSS abnormal response procedures (approx. 50) are expected to be issued by September 30. The use of draft procedures will be discontinued at that time.
2. The procedures contain immediate response checklists which will be collected in one location and indexed for ready access by the PSS on duty.

While the use of draft procedures is undesirable, they represent a technical improvement over the old quick response guides. Also changing plans now would threaten the September 30 completion date.

C. Year 2000 (Y2K) Planning at Y-12: During the staff's review, the LMES lead for Y2K planning acknowledged that each line organization was responsible for its own Y2K posture and that the engineering expertise to support them was only provided as requested. This manager further acknowledged some variations in rigor among the divisions existed and that a centralized effort to validate their work should be assembled but was not yet funded for FY99. Y-12's "pay by the drink" approach to engineering involvement is recognized by senior management as a vulnerability.

cc: Board members