

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 23, 1998

TO: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: Paul F. Gubanc, Oak Ridge Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending October 23, 1998

Staff member Monique Helfrich was at Y-12 this week to join me in observing the LMES Operational Readiness Review (ORR) of Enriched Uranium (EU) Phase-A2 processes.

A. Y-12 EU Phase-A2: On October 19, LMES declared the EU Phase-A2 processes operational, with a "manageable list" of exceptions, and started its ORR. Observations include:

1. The 6-member LMES ORR team was technically strong and thoroughly engaged.
2. Operational evolutions went smoothly and the procedures worked well. With one exception, the evolutions were conducted as scheduled.
3. Preparation of the Holden Gas furnace did not support completion of the ORR this week. LMES ORR observation of operation and surveillance of the furnace is now planned to occur Friday of next week. The LMES ORR will not complete until this occurs.
4. The number of EU "Pre-A2" open issues in the LMES commitment tracking system ("ESAMS") has continued to hold steady at about 45. EU management is pushing to close these prior to starting a DOE ORR on November 9.
5. Most of the problems the LMES ORR team is finding are issues that were previously identified, are being tracked in ESAMS, and are still awaiting corrective actions (e.g., fire protection, control of maintenance & construction, drill program). These issues are not easily dispositioned and will present a major challenge to close by November 9. Also, by having called in the ORR at this time, many of these items will now become ORR findings.
6. The Lockout/Tagout (LO/TO) system at Y-12 is restricted in application to life-safety applications; tagouts for equipment protection, system control and other purposes is controlled by "Administrative Control" locks and tags. The inappropriate use and control of Admin Control tags has been identified as an ongoing issue by the DOE Facility Reps and Board staff but has not been reviewed by this or prior ORRs of EU operations. I believe EU's use of Admin Control tags bears examination in the near future.

B. Y-12 Building 9212, E-Wing: On October 22, LMES RadCon and EU management addressed those workers affected by the respiratory protection controls in Building 9212, E-Wing:

1. RadCon's current direction is, pending review and analysis of bioassay and air sample data, to lift respiratory protection requirements in E-Wing generally but to still require respirators for those conducting hands-on work in ventilated enclosures.
2. The workers expressed frustration with their perceptions that: a) "tourists" were getting relief while they were not, b) that ventilation in the area had recently been reduced for air emission considerations which received higher priority than themselves, c) that repairs to known deficiencies in existing enclosures had not been expedited, and d) that other respiratory protection options (e.g., powered air-purifying respirators) had not yet materialized.

3. The workers expressed their feelings of physical and mental exhaustion. No doubt some will evaluate other work locations within Y-12 where the workplace controls are less onerous.

cc: Board members