

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 10, 1997

TO: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

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

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending September 10, 1997

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Mr. Gubanc identified the following details relative to PFP's plans to resume fissile material handling:

1. PFP Recovery Plan: B&W's (BWHC) PFP recovery plan was issued, with Fluor Daniel's (FDH) endorsement, on September 30 to DOE-RL for approval. As of October 9, DOE-RL has not completed its review. Our review finds the plan essentially absent of details.

2. Contractor Verification of Readiness: BWHC does not intend to perform an independent Readiness Assessment (RA). FDH will oversee BWHC's preparations but has prepared no formal guidance for the FDH observers; this is also not a formal RA. DOE-RL has expressed no objections to this path forward.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): FDH and Duke Engineering Services, Hanford (DESH) continue to work with DOE-RL to gain approval of the new proposed baseline schedule, showing the start of fuel removal in July 1999. Several of the SNFP sub-projects remain very near the overall critical path, and slow progress in design and procurement activities for the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility and Integrated Water Treatment System threaten further near-term delays.

DOE-RL has committed to establish more demanding Performance Agreements (PAs) for the SNFP for FY 1998, and is currently working to finish those PAs. However, it is unclear whether DOE-RL is willing to keep the pressure on the contractor by withholding 100% of each award fee if the corresponding milestone date is missed. Senior DOE-RL managers have stated that they are being directed to allow for partial award fee payments which will be graded by the amount of time the milestone dates are missed.

C. Unreviewed Safety Questions (USQ): Hanford's USQ process is not promptly getting potential safety issues elevated to senior management and compensatory measures taken. For example:

1. BWHC notified FDH of a potential USQ with PFP tank 241-Z-361 on August 12, 1997. FDH formally informed DOE-RL of the issue on September 26, 1997.

2. TWRS notified DOE-RL of a potential USQ with workers located at the 209-E facility in Fall 1996. DOE's USQ declaration and the implementation of compensatory measures did not occur until August 1997.

3. In December 1996, PFP experienced sparking while opening a Pu-metal container. On September 29, 1997, BWHC identified this type of event as a potential USQ.

Mr. Gubanc discussed these examples and concerns with John Wagoner on October 7. We are also continuing to collect additional information and examples.

cc: Board members