

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 9, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: M. T. Sautman

SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for Week Ending October 9, 1998

Residues. Repacking of sand, slag, and crucible (SS&C) residues resumed Monday once all the backlog containers had been assayed. (See 9/18/98 report). However, this line was shut down Wednesday and Thursday when it was discovered that SS&C had absorbed enough moisture during storage to be considered moderated. Repacking resumed Friday with criticality limits for moderated material being used. Further review found that some previously repacked drums of SS&C violated the applicable criticality limit now that they were considered moderated. In addition, RFETS and SRS are discussing the recent shipment of SS&C samples to SRS because the hydrogen/plutonium ratio of the material may have exceeded the shipping container's requirements.

The Site Rep attended a pre-evolutionary brief for the start of a new combustible residue repacking line in B371. During the pre-evolutionary brief, several issues were raised by the workers: they had not been trained on the revised procedure, there was equipment that some of the workers had not used, and the RCTs refused to work the job because they were concerned about the flow of air around the airlock. The Site Rep discussed these issues with the K-H program manager, who also was concerned. The job was then shut down until the issues were resolved and discussed with the operators in a very detailed pre-evolutionary brief. The Site Rep later watched filter media being repacked and the old containers being size reduced. The job went smooth since the operators now understood the planned activities.

Recommendation 95-2. Last week, K-H declared that integrated safety management (ISM) was implemented at RFETS. This week, RFFO began their assessment of K-H's completion of the ISM Implementation Plan.

The Site Rep reviewed a draft copy of K-H's template for administrative controls. (See 9/25/98 report). This generic list of administrative controls is to be used eventually for all nuclear facilities at RFETS with the addition of a few building-specific controls. Overall, the template appears to more clearly define what the key elements are for each program without compromising safety. The Site Rep provided K-H a list of some minor comments.

Solutions. In order to close several readiness assessment pre-start findings, B771 conducted a dry run of the high level dissolution system tap and drain process using the portable vacuum liquid transfer system. Overall the dry run went well. The K-H Nuclear Operations personnel evaluating the dry run identified 3 pre- and 5 post-start findings. Operations are expected to begin next week.

B779 Deactivation. To date, approximately 70 gloveboxes have been removed and size reduced in B779. Size reduction of the two plutonium hydride boxes is ongoing. These are the most hazardous ones because of the form and mass of plutonium in the gloveboxes.

Workers in B779 are only receiving about 3.5% of the combined internal and external dose at RFETS. However, incidents continue to occur. Two more workers have gotten holes in their Premaire suit. Luckily the positive pressure in the suit has minimized the amount of contamination entering the hole. Size reduction work in two tents had to be upgraded from PAPRs (positive air purifying respirators) to supplied air because airborne contamination exceeded the RWP suspension limits.

cc: Board members