

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 1, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
S. L. Krahn, Deputy Technical Director

FROM: R. F. Warther, M. T. Sautman

SUBJ: RFETS Activity Report for Week Ending August 1, 1997

M. Moury and D. Boyd reviewed Conduct of Operations and related issues associated with salt stabilization. W. Shields reviewed fire protection for Buildings 707 and 371.

Residues. Cooling water problems associated with the salt stabilization furnaces have been corrected, but the heating element in one furnace failed again. Training is about to begin now that gloveboxes with furnaces and assaying equipment are ready. The current start date for the Readiness Assessment is August 25.

Produce cans were tested in response to two recent cases of bulged residue cans. However, they were not able to pressurize cans to more than 5 psi because of gas leakage through the crimped seal. This is consistent with the manufacturer's claim that a single pass seam does not achieve a gas seal. One theory is that the heat sealed bags inside both cans pressurized enough to push out the can lid. Then over time, gas permeated through the plastic until the pressure was released. This was the as found condition.

RFETS personnel went to SRS this week to work out the details for shipping sand, slag, and crucible to SRS for processing. The main outstanding issue is whether RFETS will be required to separate the fines (sand, plutonium oxide) from harder to dissolve slag and crucible chunks before shipment.

SM and STA Training. The Site Reps met with RFFO training personnel to discuss the rigor of Shift Manager (SM) and Shift Technical Advisor (STA) oral qualification Boards. These qualification boards continue to be problematic. RFFO training personnel stated that they intend to baseline the SM and STA level of knowledge to (1) compare SM and STA level of knowledge with the Fac Reps, and (2) have a basis to measure program improvements over the long term.

Meetings with the Public. The Site Reps attended the Lt. Governor's pre-brief to prepare for Secretary Peña's visit to Colorado on August 7. One of the topics of concern to the public is ensuring WIPP is open to accept RFETS TRU waste. Another point made by the public is ensuring that the Secretary understands that the vast majority of the community is not opposed to shipping Pu waste material through local highway corridors, providing it can be done safely, and they believe it can be done safely. Concern was expressed that the Secretary may be hearing a small number of loud voices opposed to shipping waste offsite and claiming to speak for the state, when they in fact, do not. The Site Reps also met with John Swartout of Senator Allard's office. Mr. Swartout is Senator Allard's local staff member responsible for RFETS issues. He was provided with the legislation, Board biographies, and fifth and seventh annual reports. The discussions went well.

cc: Board Members