

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 10, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: J. Kent Fortenberry / Joe Sanders
SUBJECT: SRS Report for Week Ending October 10, 1997

FB-Line Deformed Plutonium Storage Cans - As a result of Hanford's positive USQ determination for the Pu metal reaction upon opening a 'sucked in' can (see Hanford weekly report 10/3/97), FB-Line has initiated a NI (New Information) process to evaluate potential impacts on storage of similar material at SRS. FB-Line will not repackage material known to be susceptible to this phenomena or material that is exhibiting signs of being sucked in until satisfactory evaluation of this new information.

Recent Tank Farm Occurrences - Several recent operational occurrences at the High Level Waste Tank Farms have raised questions concerning conduct of operations, configuration management, and the ability to implement administrative controls. These recent occurrences involved such things as vapor space sampling of the wrong tank, unauthorized use of emergency tank ventilation equipment, and a mispositioned leak detection conductivity probe. Most recently, an unusual occurrence was declared when it was discovered that the periodic hydrogen sample for Tank 11 was being taken from a sample line which had been isolated from the tank vapor space. In addition, it was discovered that certain shift operators, aware that the sample location was problematic, had taken the sample by pulling a riser plug. This action violated the sampling procedure and was done without proper RWP controls. These occurrences put in question the reliance on administrative controls in preserving the safety basis.

Tritium Extraction Facility (TEF) Readiness Self Assessment (RSA) - TEF management performed a RSA to evaluate whether the project was at a sufficient level of development to begin Preliminary Design. WSRC will perform Preliminary Design and subcontract Final Design and Construction. A key focus area in this assessment was whether project management systems were in place and sufficiently detailed to handle all of the upcoming activities. The review also identified those areas for which a significant amount of development and testing are still necessary. Areas of particular concern are the extractability of the target rod and the design of the furnace. This type of review is useful in that it identifies those areas which need to be strengthened if a successful design process is to be achieved.

Tritium Division Coaching Teams - The tritium division instituted coaching teams composed of management to observe operations/maintenance on nights and weekends. Two shifts are observed each week. This program began earlier this year and its purpose is two-fold: to provide advice (coaching) and to evaluate the effectiveness of operations and maintenance. The site reps attended a session and believe this is a very good way to reinforce good practices. Another major benefit of this coaching methodology is that it is sustained. Other divisions onsite could benefit from such a program.