

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 9, 2001

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending February 9, 2001

Corrective Actions. As previously reported, DOE-RFFO outlined certain safety issues in a letter to Kaiser-Hill resulting from a series of events and negative trends during the past several months. Kaiser-Hill and DOE-RFFO continue to develop the long-term corrective actions in areas such as work planning and control, supervision, conduct of operations and feedback and improvement. The site rep. noted to DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill management that staff observations related to work planning forwarded by the Board's April 25, 2000 letter (e.g., need for proper training and mentoring of work planning personnel) may be useful in completing the set of corrective actions. (1-C)

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). The PuSPS project continues to conduct dry runs and drills for the metal and oxide stabilization and packaging operations. These efforts have allowed for refinement of the operating procedures to the point where the PuSPS project intends to "baseline" the procedures within the next week and formally control subsequent changes. Building 371 still expects to declare readiness and start the Kaiser-Hill Operational Readiness Review (ORR) at the end of February.

The DOE ORR Plan-of-Action has not yet been approved and issued by DOE-RFFO. The site rep. and staff held discussions with DOE-RFFO management on the scope and timing of demonstrations being considered for the DOE ORR. The site rep. and staff emphasized the intent of DOE requirements and guidance (as well as applicable Board Recommendations) in calling for the DOE ORR to be conducted in a serial fashion with contractor reviews. (3-A)

Tank Decontamination Technology. As reported on November 9th, Kaiser-Hill is working to deploy a system to decontaminate stainless steel tanks in Building 371 using a cerium nitric acid solution. Kaiser-Hill is completing efforts to demonstrate the application of the solution in an uncontaminated tank in Building 374 later this month. Preparation of the first tanks in Building 371 for decontamination (including removal of raschig rings) is now expected to start in early March with decontamination planned in April 2001. (3-B)

Building 771 Intakes Follow-up. The Kaiser-Hill investigation to identify the source of the intakes continues. No probable cause has been identified to date. Initial bioassay results for 16 of the 45 volunteers from various work groups within Building 771 have been received. The results for 11 of these 16 individuals were slightly above the decision level. The results indicate doses of, at most, a few mrem, and potentially indicate a very low-level chronic exposure.

At the request of the DOE-RFFO Manager, a team led by DOE-EH personnel has started a separate review of the intakes issue. The field work for both the Kaiser-Hill and DOE teams is planned to be completed by February 16th. (3-B)