DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 18, 2015

TO: S. A. Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: M. T. Sautman and D. L. Burnfield, Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Weekly Report for Week Ending September 18, 2015

SRNS Operations: SRNS continued their operational pause this week (see 9/11/15 report). Two events occurred at SRNL during the operational pause. Last Friday, SRNS allowed an operation that had started before the pause commenced to continue because it was deemed prudent to do so. However, work resumed without appropriate oversight and workers entered a room that was experiencing a nuisance alarm for a continuous air monitor without obtaining radiological protection department approval. SRNS assigned additional oversight to the job before allowing it to resume. In addition, SRNL management assigned their staff to perform field observations of SRNL during the pause. A fire protection engineer identified that a roof replacement project for the flammable gas cylinder storage shed was missing the required impairment for the fire sprinkler system. Field work had started in August. The lack of an impairment constituted a TSR violation. SRNL took action to put the facility in a safe condition.

On Monday, SRNS submitted their Conduct of Operations Plan of Action to DOE. The following summarizes some of the actions SRNS took this week to improve performance:

- Senior management conducted briefings to all SRNS employees that summarized recent HB-Line and other operational issues and discussed drifts from management expectations. The site reps observed several of these sessions across SRS. In the site rep's opinion, the quality of these presentations ranged from mediocre to very good. SRNS also began conducting small group sessions to discuss procedures regularly used to validate employee's understanding of management expectations for use and adherence to procedures.
- Each organization began developing assessment plans that focus on procedure adherence, management engagement, and operation discipline. SRNS approved assessment plans for the tritium facilities, Site Services, and Engineering.
- After approval by the SRNS President or Executive Vice President, facilities may authorize operations under deliberate operations. The tritium facilities were the first to start this phase. High risk work will require prior senior supervisor or peer review prior to the work being released and management oversight during its conduct.
- SRNS developed a Response Plan for the three fissile material items in HB-Line with a non-compliant configuration. Upon DOE approval, SRNS will bring them into compliance.
- SRNS launched a Root Cause Analysis™ of the HB-Line Technical Safety Requirement (TSR) violation.
- A preliminary extent of condition review of past work packages identified several cases where material at risk inventory databases were not kept current, sometimes for as long as two weeks.

Longer term actions include an external assessment of nuclear operations focusing on nuclear safety culture, expanding training scenarios, and continuing actions to improve procedure validations, readiness assessments, and leadership training.

This Conduct of Operations episode is just the latest in a long series of very similar episodes (see 8/1/14, 4/14/14, 1/10/14, 8/30/13, 5/24/13, 6/22/12, 12/23/11, 10/7/11, 6/25/10, 10/2/09, and 6/12/09 weekly reports). In each case, the corrective actions were very similar involving a work pause, management briefings to workers, deliberate operations with senior supervisory watch, and various assessments of field work and work packages. The content of the resulting Conduct of Operations Improvement Plans, management presentations, etc. are also very similar from one event to the next. While these efforts typically result in a short-term improvement in conduct of operations for a few months, the site reps have not seen any significant long-term improvement from them. The site reps question the repeated reliance on slight variations of the same corrective actions when they do not seem to result in any sustained improvements.