

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 18, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: L. Lin and E.P. Richardson, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Activity Report for Week Ending October 18, 2024

Staff Activity: Z. McCabe began a 120-day temporary assignment as the Board's Associate Technical Director of Field Operations.

Hurricane Helene: The site continues to recover from the effects of Hurricane Helene (see 10/4/2024 report). Due to the considerable efforts by first responders and essential personnel, all nuclear facilities were maintained in a safe state, and no site personnel were injured during recovery efforts. Collectively, they cleared thousands of trees, repaired 60 power poles and over 3 miles of power lines, and responded to nearly 200 emergency calls.

The resident inspectors attended a post-job review covering all aspects of Hurricane Helene and were impressed with the immense effort put forth during and after the storm, along with the site's willingness to self-critique to drive future improvements. Representatives from all site contractors and major organizations provided useful feedback and identified strengths as well as areas for improvement.

The lack of timely communication regarding the storm's projected path change throughout the night of 9/26/2024 resulted in hundreds of site personnel being stranded in their vehicles (some for up to 12 hours) due to downed trees as they attempted to report to work. Due to road conditions, site access was secured except for essential personnel. However, many personnel were confused as to who are considered essential personnel. Management retained the previous shift workers (some for up to 24 hours) until they could be relieved to maintain minimum staffing requirements. Site personnel worked together to provide the necessary supplies (food, water, and gasoline) for personnel at the site throughout the response and recovery efforts.

Tank Farms: While reviewing training records, Tank Farms personnel discovered that a cohort of new operators did not receive all the training modules on conduct of operations. From August 2023 to July 2024, this group received one out of three conduct of operations training modules, performed practical factors while paired with qualified operators, and performed shift work while under instruction. In June of this year, the Tank Farms training manager removed the other two conduct of operations modules from this cohort's qualification cards based on the assumption that these employees would receive training on the new SRMC conduct of operations manual in July. The training manager also believed the practical factors and shift work provided them adequate training on conduct of operations. However, the new training was not rolled out at that time. There was less than adequate communications to operations management on the decision to change the operators' qualification cards and once these modules were removed from the qualification card, and there was no tracking mechanism to ensure that the new conduct of operations training was conducted in a timely manner for this group. An extent of condition was performed across the liquid waste facilities and no other issues were found. Personnel are updating the operator qualification card to include the new training and are developing corrective actions to prevent recurrence of similar issues.