

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 29, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending June 29, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: On Wednesday, a staff team discussed their observations from their review of the nuclear criticality safety program with NNSA Field Office personnel.

Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility (WETF): On Thursday, facility personnel commenced normal operations after successfully completing the activities defined in their startup plan from the 2015 federal readiness assessment.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: As part of the corrective actions in the Conduct of Operations Sustainment/Improvement Plan, Plutonium Facility managers are receiving new training on expectations for management presence in the field as part of the Management Observation Verification (MOV) program. The training emphasized that engaged management presence in the field is a key means to drive improved behaviors, provided guidance on different types of MOV activities, explained how to do a high quality MOV, and introduced a MOV mentorship program where more senior managers will evaluate the MOV activities of lower tier managers.

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: The NNSA Field Office approved the Safety Design Strategy for the Fire Alarm System replacement project. The new fire alarm system will not have a credited safety function consistent with the existing system. The approval included direction for the LANL contractor to address comments from the Chief of Defense Nuclear Safety, notably that an evaluation of the interfaces between the new Fire Alarm System and the safety-significant Facility Control System to justify the assertion that there are no safety related risks associated with that interface.

Emergency Management: Last Thursday, Security and Emergency Operations issued their after-action report for this year's full-scale exercise at WETF (see 5/11/2018 report). The report notes findings associated with: (1) a service degradation in the mass notification system used to disseminate protective actions to the workforce and subsequent failure to manually notify the workforce via phone or radio following recognition of the service degradation; (2) an incorrect protective action issued by WETF management for a remain indoors versus shelter-in-place; (3) incomplete implementation of safety protocols concerning segregation of contamination zones at the Los Alamos Medical Center; and (4) failure to ensure a compensatory measure was performed for a previous finding. The report further identifies a further 6 deficiencies and 16 opportunities for improvement including: lack of basic controller/evaluator training for about 47 % of the applicable individuals, repeat concerns regarding reliability issues with cellular phone and radio connectivity at the emergency operations center and WETF area, and the need for WETF management to make timely and complete announcements to residents of the technical area. The report commends the performance of the WETF radiological technicians for briefing and controlling contaminated patients at the medical center.

This week, Security and Emergency Operations personnel conducted a new training course for all members of the Emergency Response Organization that are expected to fill Emergency Operations Center positions. The training provided an introduction to the major functions of the emergency management program and concluded with a tabletop drill.