

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 8, 2019

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: M. T. Sautman and Z. C. McCabe, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Savannah River Site Activity Report for Week Ending February 8, 2019

Issue Investigation: The site procedure for conducting issue investigations requires a graded approach for the level of formality based on the severity, type, and significance of the event. When deemed necessary for further investigation by the responsible manager (RM), this procedure specifically calls out two types of meetings, fact findings (FF) for reportable events (or at the RM's discretion) and issue reviews (IR) for non-reportable events. However, in practice the type of meeting has become a distinction without meaningful difference. Typically, both include the same personnel, level of discussion, preparation, and follow-up actions (short of type of causal analysis). In a commendable attempt to improve (and clarify) the issue investigation process, SRNS (including Tritium) in coordination with SRR, NNSA-SRFO, and DOE-SR has undertaken efforts to revise the site procedure later this year.

Independently, Tritium personnel have implemented an alternate approach to improve the timeliness of the process via a training in August 2018 and an informal document (no procedure/revision number, not formally approved, not dated, etc.). In their process, they created a fact gathering (FG) meeting as part of the initial investigation, which was intended to be used for determining the need for an IR or FF meeting or neither. A subsequent revision eliminated the IR meeting without formally pursuing an equivalency or exemption to site requirements. Furthermore, the Resident Inspector (RI) has observed inconsistent or improper implementation of the process during the last few months that resulted in less than thorough investigation in one instance and failing to elevate significant issues beyond a FG meeting in multiple instances. While the RI has no fundamental concerns with the changes to the process, he is concerned with the lack of formality and consistency in its implementation and approval.

235-F: SRNS invoked high radiation area controls. Workers needed to secure a gloveport shielded door because the removal of debris from the Cell 1 floor ironically has reduced the amount of shielding of the radiation. While the radiation associated with specific items is easily shielded by placing them inside cans, some items are too large and need to be bagged out by hand and then placed inside a pail with a lid. One recent item read 1 rem/hr on contact.

Salt Waste Processing Facility: The RI observed the first emergency action level walkthrough drill where control room staff methodically worked through their alarm response, abnormal operating (AOP), and emergency plan implementing procedures. The conduct of this drill was better than previously seen (see 12/14/18 report) and controllers tried to have players think through what was going on inside the plant. At this time, however, many of the AOPs are not approved and operations staff will not start AOP training until the end of this month. Much work is needed to improve proficiency between now and the evaluated exercise.

SRR Training: The RI observed a new oral board for a candidate whose original oral board was voided (see 12/21/18 weekly report). The oral board members were more experienced with the oral board process and the conduct of the oral board was more rigorous.