

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 22, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: J.W. Plaue and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending March 22, 2019

Emergency Management: On Monday, Emergency Management personnel restored full operability of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). At the end of January, they declared portions of the primary and secondary EOC rooms inoperable due to safety concerns following damage to one of the safety glass panes in the glass partition wall between the rooms. Alternative locations remained available to continue EOC Operations. Late last week, utilities and infrastructure personnel taped the damaged pane to prevent further degradation; a new pane is on order. The EOC activation last week for severe weather was able to use the alternate primary location. A structural evaluation to determine why this glass was damaged is in progress.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: On Monday, Plutonium Facility management implemented a new standing order to augment programmatic requirements for the person in charge (PIC) program and to apply new expectations for performance of the reader worker method. The first new requirement states that PICs are not allowed to perform hands on work for tasks involving processing greater than 500 g of special nuclear material, processing heat source plutonium, or during high hazard work. The second requirement mandates that use every time Detailed Operating Procedures or Integrated Work Documents for operations involving processing heat source plutonium or greater than 500 g of special nuclear material be performed using the reader worker technique.

Transuranic Waste Facility (TWF)–Safety Basis: On Monday, the NNSA Field Office issued a Safety Evaluation Report approving the annual update to the TWF Safety Basis with no conditions of approval. This annual update addresses a condition of approval from NNSA’s 2016 safety basis approval (see 12/9/2016 report). The prohibition on receipt of pipe overpack containers has been removed and the new safety basis includes performance criteria for pipe overpack containers.

Area G: Last Friday, the Environmental Management Field Office (EM-LA) transmitted the new, unapproved safety basis for Area G to N3B. This safety basis was prepared by a subcontractor directly for EM-LA office prior to N3B assuming control of the Los Alamos Cleanup Contract (see 3/23/2018 report). The contract stipulated that EM-LA would provide N3B with an approved safety basis for use at Area G. However the prepared document does not align with current contract direction to N3B and their technical approach to the Area G mission. Therefore, EM-LA provided the unapproved safety basis to N3B along with their review comments with the direction that N3B initiate a new update of the Area G safety basis consistent with their current project direction and technical approach.

Last week, N3B personnel resumed repair work to restore the safety class vehicle barriers to service (see 3/1/2019 report). This week, they paused again following discovery that a change adding use of a new tool to the Integrated Work Document was made following the initial unreviewed safety question (USQ) evaluation. The Integrated Work Document did not go back through the USQ process after this change. A USQ evaluation is currently in progress and work on the barriers is expected to resume shortly.