

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 1, 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 November 1, 2019

Organizational Learning: On Wednesday, Triad management paused all “Jack and Roll” activities across the laboratory to hold a series of briefings. Triad defines “Jack and Roll” as the use of specialized equipment to vertically or horizontally move materials where the possibility of upset exists. Notably, this category excludes the drum handling activities discussed below, including the “tip and roll” maneuver, which were recently paused at the Plutonium Facility. Triad’s briefings included a review of significant recent abnormal events at the laboratory, as well as a near-miss at the Idaho National Laboratory. They emphasized ongoing collaborations with other sites to compensate for a regulatory void, reinforced policy expectations, and highlighted available mechanisms for assistance.

Plutonium Facility–Transuranic Waste Management: On Wednesday, Triad management released most work teams from the requirement of enhanced oversight for drum handling (see 10/18/2019 report). However, management has not lifted the expectation that crews are overseen by a non-working person-in-charge.

Area G: Earlier this month, N3B personnel provided the Central Characterization Project (CCP) with additional information concerning five of the containers with non-conformances against the Basis of Knowledge (see 8/9/2019 report). CCP is reviewing the information, as well as information previously provided by Triad. Thus far, N3B has been unable to find additional mitigating information associated with the other 19 non-conforming containers, including the two containers that CCP conservatively determined to contain organic cat litter and neutralized nitric acid. As a result, N3B plans to eventually treat these containers, along with several hundred other aboveground containers that have reactive or ignitable waste characteristics and are prohibited for safety reasons from the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

Plutonium Facility–Radiological Control: Two weeks ago, a continuous air monitor alarmed in a containment tent associated with the refurbishment of a plutonium-238 glovebox. All workers were in respiratory protection and there was no evidence that contamination spread out of the tent. Last Friday, a worker in the room, but not working in the tent, found contamination on their personal protective equipment during exit monitoring. Investigation discovered the most probable source of the contamination was a torn waste bag containing components from the glovebox refurbishment. Workers at the fact finding noted that planning for waste disposition should be improved to avoid situations where materials are staged in bags on the floor for extended periods of time. Waste management personnel are evaluating how to accomplish this while meeting visual examination requirements for transuranic waste.

Sigma Facility: On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office issued a letter rejecting Triad’s revised Final Hazard Categorization and criticality safety evaluation for the facility. NNSA personnel had several issues with the accuracy and completeness of the submitted documents which were intended to provide more flexible limits while precluding the potential for an inadvertent criticality accident through a nature of process argument. The field office requested Triad to revise and resubmit the documents for re-review and approval.