

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 3, 2020

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: B. Caleca and P. Fox, Hanford Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Hanford Activity Report for the Week Ending April 3, 2020

Hanford Site: Hanford site DOE and contractor management continue to follow federal and state guidance to reduce the transmission of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) (see 3/20/2020 and 3/27/2020 reports). This week, the governor of Washington State extended his order that prohibits non-essential social and work activities that increase the potential for COVID-19 spread through May 4, 2020. The Richland Operations/Office of River Protection manager also extended the current essential mission critical operations posture through next week. While in this status, DOE and contractor managers are working closely with each other to define and accomplish necessary safety, compliance, and property protection tasks. A limited number of workers continue to report to the site to perform those tasks in order to maintain the site and its facilities in a safe condition while following guidance on social distancing.

The COVID-19 response actions noted above have resulted in temporary closure of the Volpentest Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response Federal Training Center. Although workers who have telework capability can still perform computer based training, hands-on training cannot occur until the training center is reopened. Many hands-on training activities support the periodic update of worker qualifications or certifications. This week, DOE Hanford granted a 120-day extension for Hanford site personnel retraining due dates for locally mandated training. DOE Hanford is also working with DOE Headquarters to obtain approval for extensions of higher level, federally mandated training.

DOE has reduced on site facility representative presence to minimize the hazard to the facility representatives and reduce the potential for COVID-19 spread to the workforce. The facility representatives use remote monitoring techniques to understand facility status, maintain awareness of the limited ongoing essential work, and track any emerging issues. If a facility representative determines that a planned work activity warrants on site coverage, the facility representative discusses methods for safe accomplishment of oversight with their supervisor prior to performing the oversight activity.

Waste Treatment Plant (WTP): The National Academies of Sciences (NAS) Committee on Supplemental Treatment of Low-Activity Waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation released a final report that documents their independent review of a Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) study. The SRNL study analyzed potential technologies for treating supplemental low-activity waste (SLAW) at Hanford site. SLAW is the low-activity waste that is excess to that portion of low-activity waste that will be treated by vitrification in the WTP Low-Activity Waste facility. The study focused on vitrification, grouting, or fluidized bed steam reforming of SLAW and potential sites for disposal of these treated wastes. Per their congressionally developed mandate, the NAS committee did not recommend a specific treatment option, but did provide their findings regarding the quality and usefulness of the information contained in the SRNL study, and also provided recommendations for use of the SRNL study, and future work regarding treatment options for SLAW.