

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 12, 2020

**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 12, 2020

**COVID-19 Impacts:** On Monday, the NNSA and EM Field Offices, as well as N3B entered phase 1 of their resumption plans. Triad continues to perform essential functions and is gradually increasing onsite work in accordance with their institutional policy for COVID-19 controls.

**Plutonium Facility–Glovebox Safety:** On Monday, continuous air monitors sounded when an operator pulled out of the glovebox gloves after weighing and packaging plutonium-238 oxide powder. The worker received significant contamination on his protective clothing, hair, and skin, as well as positive nasal swabs indicating a potential intake. Radiation protection personnel successfully decontaminated the individual, and he was provided chelation therapy. The room experienced significant airborne radioactivity and was contaminated. Fourteen additional workers were placed on bioassay. On Thursday, Triad management conducted a fact-finding to discuss the event, response, and near-term actions. Given the significance of the event, they chartered a team to perform a comprehensive investigation.

**Area G–Emergency Management:** Last Saturday, high winds damaged an electrical pole near the operations center. The loss of power triggered trouble alarms from impacted fire panels. Upon responding, N3B personnel observed a smoking pole and damage to the electrical equipment so called Triad utilities personnel and the fire department. Following this initial response, N3B personnel noted an emergent brush fire adjacent to the pole which was promptly extinguished by the fire department. While the offshift response was prompt, communications for the brushfire did not reach all parties in a timely manner. Power was restored and the fire panels were back in service by the end of the week.

**Transuranic Waste Management:** On Monday, workers successfully changed the corroded filters found on seven waste containers first discovered last May (see 5/24/2019 and 9/6/2019 reports). The workers noted varying levels of corrosion, but no occlusion of the filter vent path. They are currently evaluating the need to replace a corroded filter on another container recently returned from the Transuranic Waste Facility. They are also working with the Carlsbad Field Office to determine whether any actions are necessary to prevent recurrence with this waste matrix.

**Area G–Readiness:** N3B and EM personnel decided to setup a routine standing meeting to discuss upcoming readiness activities. They realized that better attendance, to include EM Headquarters readiness personnel, is necessary to reduce the backlog of approvals needed for the slate of upcoming readiness reviews. For example, the EM Field Office has not acted on one of N3B's quarterly startup notification reports since April 2019. Similarly, N3B has been waiting for approval of its revised readiness process since November 2019.

**Legacy Facilities:** On Wednesday, EM Field Office personnel and N3B program management accompanied the resident inspectors on a walk-down of Technical Area 21. The focus of the walk-down was familiarization with planned decontamination and demolition of an old radioactive liquid waste treatment facility and associated industrial liquid waste lines that are radioactively contaminated. EM and N3B are currently assessing the impact of higher than expected results from a recent radiological characterization on the path forward for the removal of these structures.