

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 13, 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 November 13, 2020

Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC): The DOE team completed its readiness assessment for venting and handling of the FTWCs stored at Area G and out-briefed site personnel on Tuesday. The team concluded that the operation can start safely following resolution of four pre-start findings, one related to radiological protection and the other three in safety basis. The team also provided two management concerns: (1) that insights from the contractor readiness assessment were not fully addressed and (2) safety basis issues identified by the federal readiness assessment should have been captured during the implementation verification review. The team also noted that their review assumed that the actual venting evolution would occur in this calendar year. If weather or other factors cause a significant delay, the team recommended that an additional mockup evolution be performed for onsite members of the readiness team to demonstrate continued proficiency.

Area G–Readiness: On Monday, a ten person team commenced the contractor readiness assessment for restart of Glovebag and Drill & Drain operations at Area G. These activities will remediate transuranic waste containers in the Dome 231 Perma-Con to support compliant shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. Glovebag activities include removal of prohibited items such as aerosol cans from waste, splitting contents of high-activity drums, and treatment of ignitable or corrosive waste. Drill & Drain operations will puncture drum liners to drain liquids or sludge, which will be captured and stabilized. The drained drum liners will then be returned to a compliant container.

Readiness: Last Friday, the EM Field Office approved N3B’s startup notification report (SNR) for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020. The approval letter further outlines the history and disposition of SNRs submitted by N3B since December 2019. The field office noted concerns that were informally transmitted to N3B with the expectation of remedy in subsequent submittals. The concerns primarily involved schedule discrepancies and the absence of the FTWC venting activity from the SNR. The EM Field Office last approved a SNR in April 2019 and has been evaluating N3B’s revised procedure for its readiness process for the last year (see 6/12/2020 report).

On Monday, the NNSA Field Office approved Triad’s SNR for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020. The field office acknowledged some projected dates had changed and reminded Triad of the requirement to update information that changes between quarterly SNR submittals.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building: On Thursday, Triad transmitted to the NNSA Field Office for review and approval the evaluation of the safety of the situation (ESS) regarding the potential for a perchlorate explosive hazard in the facility’s drain system. The ESS notes that the concern is based on a conservative interpretation of visual evidence rather than sampling. The ESS proposes to conduct sampling activities prior to work on drains that may have supported perchlorate processing operations.

COVID-19 Impacts: Case counts at the laboratory continued to increase, consistent with regional trends. The laboratory also continued to experience several events with confirmed positive individuals that had high numbers of close contacts.