

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 18, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending June 18, 2021

Transuranic Waste Management: Last Thursday, workers identified a transuranic waste drum on an outdoor storage pad with a corroded drum filter. They promptly tagged and segregated the drum, and later moved it indoors to the basement of the Plutonium Facility. The drum primarily contains glovebox gloves from heat source plutonium operations. Filter corrosion was observed two years ago from drums containing the same type of gloves used in heat source operations (see 5/24/2019 report). Unlike the previous event, facility personnel declared the drum inoperable due to the degraded filter. The resident inspector believes that is the appropriate decision for heavily corroded drum filters, where their ability to provide a filtered vent path is not readily discernable through a visual inspection. The more modern Transuranic Waste Facility safety basis includes more explicit statements about filter integrity for drum operability than the Plutonium Facility safety basis. Triad plans to analyze the filter to determine the cause of the corrosion.

Area G–Safety Basis: Last Friday, Environmental Management Headquarters and Field Office personnel unconditionally approved the Justification for Continued Operations (JCO) for the potential inadequacy of the safety analysis for headspace flammable gas sampling of transuranic waste drums (see 6/4/2021, 1/31/2020 reports). DOE noted they expect the JCO to be implemented within 90 days. Due to inclusion of a new credited hazard control in the JCO, N3B is planning an Implementation Verification Review.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: Housekeeping and management of low-level and other combustible waste in the basement of the Plutonium Facility has been a continuing challenge. The increased pace of construction work to support the pit production mission has correspondingly increased waste generation. During basement walkdowns, the resident inspector has noted numerous plastic bags filled with garbage accumulating. Of note, several undated plastic bags filled with cardboard framed air filters have been staged for the past month. An informal marking on one bag notes that these filters have no waste acceptance form and are of questionable provenance. There is also no transient combustible permit associated with the bags. Facility management does have a project to improve housekeeping in the basement. On a positive note, during the last plant inventory, the amount of combustible waste in the basement was significantly lower than normally observed.

On Site Transportation: Last Tuesday, Triad submitted to the NNSA Field Office for approval an addendum to the Transportation Safety Document to allow shipping of potentially pyrophoric material in accordance with the proposal outlined in a recent Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation (see 5/21/2021 report).