

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 24, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending September 24, 2021

DNFSB Staff Activity: This week, members of the Board's staff held separate teleconferences with NNSA Field Office and Environmental Management (EM) Field Office personnel to discuss the staff's observations on its review of federal oversight.

Area G: On Monday, N3B transmitted to the EM Field Office for approval the annual update to the existing Area G safety basis, which is a Basis for Interim Operations rather than a more modern Documented Safety Analysis. In July, the EM Field Office and EM Headquarters rejected a previous submittal and directed that N3B submit a revised document that incorporated the Justification for Continued Operations related to headspace gas sampling (see 6/18/2021 report) and the safety analysis and credited hazard controls for the Flanged Tritium Waste Container venting activity (see 4/16/2021 report). The new revision includes other changes to address EM review comments such as noting activities (e.g., drum venting and retrieval from trenches) that will not be performed until a modern safety basis is developed. EM personnel are evaluating the revised submittal.

On Wednesday, N3B management paused all vehicle usage due to a series of vehicle incidents at their sites. One impact occurred Tuesday in Area G where a vehicle impacted a jersey barrier outside of a waste storage dome. The impact barrier was not one of the credited safety-class vehicle barriers to protect high-risk locations. An engineering incident discovered no positional change or damage to the barrier following the impact. N3B previously paused work due to vehicle concerns in January (see 1/29/2021 report). Management is evaluating whether corrective actions from that timeframe remain effective.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office transmitted a letter to Triad requesting a resubmittal of the Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation (ESS) related to the July overflow of water in the Plutonium Facility (see 9/10/2021 report). NNSA provided six comments that needed to be addressed in a revised ESS. Those comments include requesting that the ESS provide: an evaluation for potential water entry into all systems that vent to the Zone 1 ventilation system, a full consideration of overflow paths from both active and inactive chilled water and wet vacuum systems, and a clear discussion of future deliverables to address the problem including any engineering modifications or safety submittals. The Field Office requested a response by October 1, 2021.

Safety Basis: Last Tuesday, Triad transmitted to the NNSA Field Office a revision of their Unreviewed Safety Question (USQ) process intended to address the condition of approval from the May approval of the revised process (see 5/14/2021 report). The resubmittal notes that the New Information process is 'associated with' rather than 'separate from' the USQ process in response to the condition of approval that directed the procedure be revised to note that the New Information Process is a part of the USQ process. NNSA is evaluating whether the changes address their concern with the previous submittal.