

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 8, 2021

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Erin A. McCullough, Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Report for September 2021

DNFSB Staff Activity. Board's staff members completed two trips to INL in September. During the week of September 13, 2021, two staff members observed the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU) Department of Energy readiness assessment (DOE RA). The Board's current and former cognizant engineers also performed turnover activities on site during the week of September 27, 2021.

COVID-19 Update. Severe shortages of medical infrastructure and healthcare providers caused the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) to activate Crisis Standards of Care on September 16, 2021. According to the IDHW, these standards are "a measure of last resort" that allow healthcare providers to ration and prioritize care that patients receive. In an Employee Bulletin dated September 13, 2021, Fluor Idaho mandated COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment for all members of the Idaho Cleanup Project workforce, including Fluor Idaho employees, sub-contractors, staff augmentation, teleworkers, and new hires. Current employees must be vaccinated by December 1, 2021, and new employees hired on or after October 15, 2021, must be vaccinated against COVID-19. Fluor Idaho will consider exemption requests with an articulable legal basis individually.

IWTU Confirmatory Run DOE RA. The IWTU is still a radiologically clean facility. Before IWTU can process radiological materials, Fluor Idaho must first demonstrate process safety and reliability using nonradiological "simulant," which is accomplished via a confirmatory run. During the week of September 13, 2021, Board's staff members observed a series of interviews, demonstrations, and an operational drill performed for the RA team at IWTU. The DOE RA evaluated modifications to the facility, the radiation protection program, personnel training, technical procedures, and operations. The DOE RA team identified three pre-start and three post-start findings in its outbrief, some pertaining to nuclear safety while others concerned occupational safety and work control. The contractor must resolve all pre-start findings before progressing to the IWTU confirmatory run. The IWTU Confirmatory Run DOE RA final report is forthcoming.

Radiological Posting Violation. On September 15, 2021, a radiological control technician (RCT) observed two fire protection engineers (FPE) enter a contamination area inside WMF-636 at the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project. Warning signs on the door directed personnel to contact Radiological Controls prior to entry. Behind the posted door, there were also two rope barriers. The first rope barrier had a Contamination Area sign requiring entrants to sign in on a Radiological Work Permit. The second, a few feet further into the area, had additional postings. The FPEs entered the door and crossed the first rope barrier without following the directions on the posted radiological signs. An RCT stopped them before they could cross the second rope barrier. Subsequent radiological frisking determined that the FPEs had no detectable contamination. Following this incident, Radiological Controls placed additional rope boundaries and signs in front of the door.