

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 10, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending December 10, 2021

DNFSB Staff Activity: Staff members W. Dumayas, P. Migliorini, P. Natividad, and J. Plaue were on site to perform a review of construction quality lessons learned for fire protection features from the Radiological Laboratory Utility Office Building and the Transuranic Waste Facility. The staff toured both facilities as part of the review and also went to the Weapons Engineering Tritium Facility, the Emergency Operations Center, and joined DOE Environmental Management headquarters personnel at Area G.

Area G–Safety Basis: Last week, Environmental Management Field Office and headquarters personnel conditionally approved the annual update to the Area G safety basis (see 9/24/2021 report). The three conditions of approval were: to evaluate fixed and rotary wing aircraft crashes to address issues stemming from the potential inadequacy of the safety analysis early this year and update the safety basis per the results of said analysis (see 3/26/2021 report), enter a written agreement between N3B and Triad to maintain a 1500-foot helicopter standoff distance from Area G, and a prohibition on venting and handling activities for the Flanged Tritium Waste Containers until revised calculations are completed and incorporated into approved and implemented safety basis documents.

The Environmental Management Chief of Nuclear Safety and members of their staff were on site along with members of the contractor’s reachback team supporting development of a modern safety basis for Area G (see 12/3/2021 report). The Board’s staff joined them on a full walkthrough of Area G. Focus areas of the walkdown included: current and planned waste operations including upcoming corrugated metal pipe and glovebag activities; desired approaches for control implementation from the workforce to complete their mission effectively; and the current condition of the facility following implementation of the four Justifications for Continued Operations and the movement of many drums of concern to Dome 33 (see 11/26/2021 report).

Transuranic Waste Management: Triad personnel briefed the NNSA Field Office on their recommendation for re-establishing the capability to remediate oversized, non-compliant waste containers or difficult waste streams including treatment, repackaging, or removal of prohibited items. They recommended using the Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF) under a new hazard category 3 safety basis (see 11/26/2021 report). Other options considered included: working with N3B to perform the work at Area G, performing the work in the Plutonium Facility, using the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building, building a new nuclear facility, or transporting items offsite for treatment. NNSA is evaluating Triad’s recommendation.