

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 29, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Boussouf and D. Gutowski, Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for Week Ending July 29, 2022

Plutonium Facility–Infrastructure: The resident inspector joined facility management and the NNSA facility representatives on a walkdown of the Plutonium Facility. One purpose was to see the progress on installing new trolley controllers. The previous controllers had obsolete parts that were becoming difficult to procure even through non-traditional sources. The modern system will also provide additional capabilities for more efficient trolley operations.

The Plutonium Facility's credited diesel firewater pumps are being upgraded, partly due to issues procuring obsolete parts. One pumphouse has been upgraded and is slated to come online next month. The other will be replaced this year. This upgrade will provide improved pump performance and access to spare parts which will reduce system downtime. In addition, this modern pump design will be more familiar to a changing maintenance workforce that may lack experience with fifty-year-old pump designs.

Plutonium Facility–Conduct of Operations: During the above walkdown, the resident inspector noted that housekeeping in the basement, especially transient combustible loading, was greatly improved from previous observations (see 6/18/2021 report). Facility personnel have procured new metal boxes for staging combustible waste bags. They are also installing a tool crib to reduce the number of toolboxes cluttering the basement.

Last Friday, the NNSA field office formally transmitted to Triad the final assessment report from the NNSA Team that reviewed conduct of operations at the Plutonium Facility. The assessment team looked strategically at conduct of operations implementation. Though all objectives and criteria were considered met, the report identified several weaknesses (see 6/17/2022 report). The field office has requested a corrective action plan addressing these issues within 30 days.

Flanged Tritium Waste Containers (FTWC)–Readiness: The federal readiness assessment for venting FTWCs stored at Area G occurred in November 2020 (see 11/13/2020 report). Given timing uncertainties for closing out issues from the readiness reviews and the constraints on performing the actual activity, the readiness team recommended that an additional field proficiency demonstration be performed for them prior to startup if there was a substantial delay. On Thursday, the EM field office manager transmitted a memorandum to the startup authorization authority at EM headquarters documenting an approach consistent with this recommendation from two years ago. The proposed approach states that NNSA and EM field office personnel do not believe that reperforming a full readiness assessment is needed given the current state of the personnel, procedures, and equipment. Instead, they will perform an additional formal proficiency demonstration. The letter also notes that continued delays in venting the FTWCs at Area G will increase the risk to the workers performing venting as pressures may increase. Meanwhile, Triad personnel performed additional rehearsals with mockup FTWCs at TA-49 this week in preparation for the upcoming proficiency demonstration and actual operations.