

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 2, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending August 2, 2024

Staff Activity: M. Bradisse and J. Kim were on site this week. They walked down the Transuranic Waste Facility and Area G to compare conditions and control strategies at transuranic waste facilities from different eras, visited the Emergency Operations Center, and observed a second workshop where the Emergency Operations Center activation was activated in its alternative location (see 7/19/2024 report).

Plutonium Facility–Glovebox Safety: On Wednesday, workers preparing to perform machining in a glovebox experienced a glovebox window cracking event. A pair of pliers were caught during movement of the machining equipment such that they were pushed against the glovebox window. This type of box has the gloveports installed directly into the window glass for improved visibility. The impact of the pliers resulted in spiderweb cracking throughout the laminated safety glass of the glovebox window. The workers immediately evacuated the room upon hearing the cracking glass. Responding radiological control technicians discovered no spread of contamination to personnel or the room and found no evidence of airborne radioactivity. The damaged glovebox is maintaining negative pressure with respect to the room, and it is posted out of service. Recovery planning is in progress. The recovery effort will involve a contamination control tent to support replacement of the damaged window. Corrective actions under evaluation to prevent recurrence of such an event include reviewing work documentation for machining operations for potential revisions regarding tool control and installing visual markings in areas that must be kept clear when machines are in motion.

Plutonium Facility–Emergency Preparedness: On Wednesday night, during the backshift, Triad held an emergency preparedness drill at the Plutonium Facility. The scenario was a criticality accident. Workers evacuated the facility from pre-staged locations in the hallways to avoid exiting laboratory rooms without radiological monitoring. Upon actuation of the criticality accident alarm, they evacuated from the hallways and proceeded to assembly areas where radiological control technicians performed building exit surveys. Approximately 40 backshift workers evacuated the plant supported by operations center and radiological control personnel.

Area G: On Wednesday, the visiting staff members and resident inspector toured Area G to support the staff's review of the new safety basis (see 7/19/2024 report). One focus was to observe both the current and the planned placement of safety class vehicle barriers that protect waste drums from vehicle impacts. The staff members saw the tremendous amount of standard waste boxes stored in Area G from corrugated metal pipe (CMP) activities. Each cut CMP creates five segments which are individually packaged in a standard waste box. More than half of the CMPs have been size reduced to date. The staff members also observed both CMP retrieval and CMP size reduction activities while in Area G.