

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 23, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: B. Broderick and C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending March 23, 2007

Plutonium Facility: This week, TA-55 declared a TSR violation and stood down operations when gas cylinders were found to lack the multiple restraints required by a specific administrative control (SAC). The existing wording of the SAC lacked specificity and could be interpreted as requiring every vessel containing pressurized gas in the facility to have dual restraint, regardless of the volume and working pressure. NNSA approved a Justification for Continued Operations to clarify the applicability of the restraint requirement on Thursday, after which TA-55 resumed normal operations.

Additionally, on March 8th, NNSA approved a Preliminary Documented Safety Analysis for an interim radiography capability at TA-55 that relies on extending PF-4 safety and support systems, including confinement ventilation and fire suppression. This capability, scheduled for startup in October 2007, will reduce the need for offsite Pu shipments and substantially increase pit manufacturing efficiency.

Integrated Corrective Action Plan (ICAP): LANL is late on several ICAP corrective actions, which were developed in response to the 2005 DOE-OA review and two NNSA Type B investigations. For example, LANL informed the Board last November that an improved integrated work management (IWM) process would be implemented by September but that is now projected for November; this is one of several important ICAP commitments. LANL management is increasing attention to this area.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): LANL is evaluating the mission needs and safety implications of extending CMR lifetime, notionally to 2016 (site rep weeklies 1/19/07, 12/1/06). Specifically, LANL expects within a few weeks to finish a study on mission needs and durations to support wing closure planning and, by October, to assess associated hazards and potential control strategies, leading to a safety basis upgrade in FY-08.

In parallel, CMR is now vacating offices and removing material-at-risk from the two northern wings (2 & 4), considered to be the most seismically vulnerable. Wing 9 has been quiescent but is about to begin a characterization activity on activated structural components (i.e. Co-60 hazard); planning continues for other Wing 9 missions, including installing a large vessel clean-out capability (a DOE commitment under Recommendations 94-1/00-1) and addressing remote-handled transuranic waste.

Transportation: This week, NNSA approved LANL's annual update for the on-site transportation safety basis, the first approved update in several years. For moves involving Hazard Category 2 inventories, the update specifies a material-at-risk limit and requires using transportainers; it also retains a road closure requirement for publicly accessible roads and removes the requirement for restricted roads (i.e., the Parajito corridor). NNSA and LANL assert that the controls assure equivalent, though not identical, safety to that provided by Department of Transportation requirements.

Management: On Thursday, the LANL Director summarized management's multi-year goals and near-term commitments, including those involving safety, and distinguished these from the performance based incentives negotiated with NNSA. Also this week, LASO re-initiated an integrated operations team focused on the national security mission (i.e., TA-55, CMR, WETF).