

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 27, 2001

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director

FROM: D. Grover and M. Sautman, Hanford Site Representatives

SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending April 27, 2001

Mr. Sautman attended training offsite Tuesday through Friday.

Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): The project was scheduled to resume processing Multi-Canister Overpacks (MCO) this week following the completion of the maintenance outage in the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility (CVDF). However, due to problems in the K-West Basin, the 6 MCO fuel baskets were not filled and loaded in the MCO until late Thursday delaying shipment until Monday when facility staffing is sufficient to support the transfer. The problems included a hydraulic seal failure resulting from improper maintenance during the outage, conflict between the integrated water treatment system procedures and revised software added during the outage, a misalignment of a fuel canister in the primary clean machine which prevented operation, and a software problem with the MCO basket loading system. The project will formally evaluate their performance during the outage following the completion of the Canister Storage Building portion of the outage and issue a Lessons Learned. (III-A)

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Mr. Sautman observed the sampling of a 40-year old item identified as plutonium aluminum alloy turnings in oil. The can was full of alloy turnings covered with a liquid that had the color and consistency of honey. The turnings were not reactive. When the "oil" began to smoke soon after a small quantity of turnings were placed on a hot plate, the Site Rep informed the scientist that no further data was needed and suggested stopping the test. The Site Rep believes that the four cans of this material are not suitable for long-term storage without removal of the oily substance and need to be stored in vented containers until they can be stabilized (likely in a furnace). Unlike other turnings, the Site Rep believes this material is still "high risk" and should be excluded from the group of alloys that PFP proposes to reclassify as residues that will not be repacked for a couple years. (III-A)

Meetings with Senior Management: Mr. Sautman met with DOE Office of River Protection (ORP) manager, Mr. Boston, who requested a meeting to discuss current issues. Issues discussed included the facility representative program, strengths and weaknesses in ORP's assessment programs, and conduct of operations in the tank farms. The current skill mix and large number of open senior positions continue to impact ORP's effectiveness. Mr. Grover had meetings with Fluor Hanford executive vice president Dave Van Leuven and DOE Richland deputy manager Mike Schlender to discuss issues associated with the SNFP and PFP.

cc: Board Members