

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 12, 1999

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: R. Arcaro, & D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representatives

SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending February 12, 1999

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): On February 10, Mr. Arcaro observed stabilization operations at PFP. A can of plutonium oxide was bagged out of a glovebox, double-canned, and moved to a temporary vault location. The operators performed this evolution professionally, deliberately, and without incident. The actual movement of material took about 90 minutes; however, the combination of preparatory, radiological controls, security, and post-job requirements stretched the evolution to more than three hours. Possible improvements in efficiency were discussed with the DOE Facility Representative.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): This week senior DOE-RL and contractor management established a Safety Analysis Report (SAR) Committee composed of senior DOE-RL and contractor staff to address SNFP SAR issues. The committee, led by the DOE-RL Director of the Office of Environment Safety & Health, will facilitate communications and coordination between contractor safety engineers and DOE-RL SAR reviewers. The site representative believes this, or similar steps, are necessary to ensure proper coordination and resource loading as the project submits several significant SAR documents to DOE-RL for approval in the next few months.

C. Transition Facilities: Mr. Arcaro observed a pre-job brief for an entry into building 242-B/BL. This building, previously used by PNNL for radioactive particle testing, has not been entered for over a year and the radiological and structural conditions were not known with certainty. The brief covered all the hazards and controls identified by the job task analysis. The operators provided additional useful input, including the need for a battery-powered air sampler as the availability of electrical power was not assured. While all steps of the evolution were eventually covered through questions and information volunteered by the operators, the brief could have been improved by providing a more systematic review of the procedure.

D. Hanford Advisory Board (HAB): On February 11-12, the HAB met to discuss the status of several Hanford issues. The HAB afforded special attention to plutonium stabilization activities at PFP. Mr. Ogg attended sessions on both days of the HAB meeting and gave presentations on Recommendation 94-1 and recent DNFSB correspondence and activities related to PFP. State regulators and some HAB members expressed great concern for the absence of enforceable Tri-Party Agreement milestones at PFP, and for the hurdle presented by the classification of PFP materials as "product" rather than "waste." DOE-RL responded that the materials at PFP are governed by the Atomic Energy Act, and that redesignation would have to be handled by DOE-HQ.

cc: Board members