

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 5, 1999

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

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

SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending March 5, 1999

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Phase III of thermal stabilization is expected to be complete by the end of this week, more than three weeks ahead of schedule. The next phase allows thermal stabilization of plutonium oxide material without enhanced supervision. PFP management is developing plans for the verification of readiness to thermally stabilize other feed materials.

Last week, DOE decided on a precipitation process as the means for stabilizing impure plutonium solutions. More information was needed to decide whether or not to use the precipitation process in place of the Vertical Denitration Calciner (VDC) for the stabilization of pure solutions. To support this decision, B&W Hanford Co. (BWHC) is performing a detailed review of the VDC to clarify what exactly needs to be done to make the VDC operational and to critically evaluate its expected reliability. BWHC expects to be able to make a decision on the VDC's future by April 15.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): Through the use of the SAR Management Support Team, DOE-RL and SNFP managers came to an agreement on the review process for the Multi-canister Overpack Topical Report and the Canister Storage Building FSAR. DOE-RL committed to making this effort a high priority and providing additional resources for the concurrent reviews.

SNFP personnel continue to investigate the drain line from KW-Basin. Only a small amount of water was found in the pipe, indicating that the drain line is isolated from the KW-Basin. However, a subsequent standing water test, in which 1750 gallons of water were added to the pipe without a corresponding rise in water level, indicates that there may be a breach in the pipe somewhere downstream of the basin drain valves.

C. DOE-RL Senior Management Positions: On February 24, DOE-RL posted a job announcement for the position of Assistant Manager for Waste Management that was recently vacated by Mr. Charlie Hansen. Additionally, the position of Manager remains vacant, although, reportedly, an announcement is to be made within 30 days.

D. Sluicing of Tank C-106: The resumption of sluicing of high heat tank C-106 is expected this weekend. The leaking jumper that required that the sluicing be terminated several weeks ago has been replaced. Additionally, an industrial hygiene study has been completed to identify controls needed to protect the workers from organic emissions. All operators within the tank farm boundary will be required to wear forced air respiratory protection during the sluicing operation. Downwind monitoring will be performed to ensure that respiratory protection is not required for those outside of the tank farm boundary.

cc: Board members