

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 2, 2001

**TO:** J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative  
**SUBJECT:** RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending November 2, 2001

**Recommendation 2000-2.** Commitment 11 in the DOE Implementation Plan for Recommendation 2000-2 states that by September 2001 field element managers will assemble teams to assess the condition of confinement ventilation systems important to safety. As reported on August 31<sup>st</sup>, DOE-RFFO proposed to DOE Headquarters that ventilation systems to be assessed under commitment 11 not include those that are being decommissioned or are planned for decommissioning within 5 years. Commitment 14 of the Plan deals with actions to designate contractor system engineers via Secretary of Energy direction. The Secretary of Energy issued direction in February to institute qualification requirements for assigned system engineers by September 2001.

The site rep. and staff discussed the status of the commitments noted above with DOE-RFFO management this week. DOE-RFFO is still awaiting a response to their August proposal on commitment 11 from DOE Headquarters and has not proceeded with (nor even planned) any confinement ventilation system assessments. Regarding institution of system engineer qualification requirements, DOE-RFFO had verbally put in abeyance their prior (April 2001) direction to Kaiser-Hill to proceed and was preparing correspondence to DOE-Headquarters reflecting this decision. Following these discussions, DOE-RFFO management indicated to the site rep. that DOE-RFFO is reconsidering this action. (1-C)

**Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS).** Welding issues continue to slow operations. As noted last week, an inner can weld had a small hole. Maintenance of the inner can welder to replace parts preventing contaminants from entering the laser beam and shield gas was performed and several satisfactory inner can welds were completed. Mid-week, however, operations were stopped when indications of expulsion (very small beads separating from the weld base) were observed on multiple outer can welds. While operations were resumed following a satisfactory test can at week's end, RFETS is looking at outer can welder performance and reliability and considering longer range actions to improve production efficiency. (3-A)

**Inner Tent Chamber (ITC) Development.** As noted on April 27, 2001, Kaiser-Hill had been developing third-generation ITCs for use in Building 771 and in Building 776. These ITCs have remotely operated mechanical arms for grasping and moving cut pieces to the wastebox in the ITC. The new ITCs are in final stages of testing and operator training using non-contaminated gloveboxes. Operations on contaminated gloveboxes are expected to start in the next few weeks. Building 776 has planned to use only mechanical cutting tools in their new ITC, but this decision may be revisited in early 2002. The new Building 771 ITC employs plasma-arc cutting. (3-B)

**Public Interaction.** The site rep. presented an update on Board activities to the RFETS Citizens Advisory Board. Issues addressed included PuSPS operations, RFETS response to the Board's June 21<sup>st</sup> letter on electrical safety, and RFETS actions under Recommendation 2000-2.