

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 18, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending September 18, 1998

Staff members R. Arcaro and S. Stokes were on site assisting with Site Representative duties.

A. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): DOE-RL had committed to approve the Cold Vacuum Drying (CVD) Facility Phase II Safety Analysis Report (SAR) by September 15 (a milestone listed in the Board's letter of September 11, 1998 to DOE). However, DOE-RL reports that there are several concerns that remain unresolved and is working with SNFP management and safety analysis personnel to close these issues prior to SAR approval.

Several components of the Fuel Retrieval System and the Integrated Water Treatment System have been delayed in fabrication or delivery. Although SNFP project managers are working to expedite these deliveries, this is an indication of continued project difficulty in managing design and fabrication interfaces with the vendors.

B. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Messrs. Arcaro and Stokes met with senior DOE-RL and Babcock and Wilcox Hanford Company personnel to discuss the path forward at PFP. PFP faces significant barriers to timely initiation and completion of plutonium stabilization activities. Substantive problems exist in Conduct of Operations, project planning and management, and criticality safety programs. Additionally, all technical issues such as risks of opening plutonium storage cans, have not been identified and resolved. While it is clear that the senior management recognizes these problems and has several initiatives in place to resolve them, continued delays in beginning stabilization activities indicate that these problems are not being attacked systematically and efficiently. The Board's Site Representative and staff have initiated routine monthly meetings with senior DOE-RL and contractor management to follow these issues closely.

C. Recommendation 93-5: Messrs. Arcaro and Stokes met with DOE-RL and contractor representatives responsible for the tank waste characterization program to discuss future justification for the closure of Recommendation 93-5. Emphasis was placed on meeting the intent of all of the original recommendations. DOE does not plan on sampling all of the tanks prior to proposing closure of the Recommendation. Rather, DOE-RL and its contractors will be developing an argument that shows that all information necessary today for safety and design needs has been obtained, and that an institutionalized system exists for meeting future needs.

D. Meeting with Congressional Staff: On September 14, Messrs. Ogg and Arcaro met with House of Representatives staff member, Mr. Dwight Cates. Discussions included the Hanford Spent Nuclear Fuel Project and the TWRS Privatization contract.

cc: Board members