

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 3, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: M. T. Sautman, R. F. Warther

SUBJ: RFETS Activity Report for Week Ending October 3, 1997

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (SPS). BNFL has committed that the entire SPS will be ready to turn over to RFFO by the end of December. This is approximately four months past the latest performance measure and over a year later than earlier expectations. The Site Reps are concerned that this date will be missed because Raytheon has not identified a solution to reduce the time for the furnace to cool down. Resolving the cooling issue will probably not be easy since the plutonium itself has a large heat capacity (about 50% of the total heat capacity), the air flow rate is kept to a minimum to prevent suspension of the dispersible oxide, and water cooling is not desired for criticality safety reasons. If the current 27 hour cycle is to be reduced to 5 hours, either some of the specifications will likely have to be modified or the design significantly changed. More importantly, this cost-plus contract is already several million dollars over budget and current funding will run out in two weeks. RFFO is appropriately cautious about committing additional funds given the current situation and is negotiating with BNFL on this issue. The delays and technical problems being experienced with the prototype SPS have the potential to impact SPS plans at other DOE sites.

B779 Decommissioning. The site reps toured B779 this week to review plans to deactivate this facility. Two issues must be resolved. First, SSOC and RMRS have not determined the details of which material and equipment will be removed from the building and how they will be removed. Second, the process of implementing an ISMS at RFETS for decommissioning activities has not been fully developed. K-H and its subcontractors are working to develop a means to reduce the controls required by the AB documents to ensure they are consistent with the facility hazards and risks. The USQ and JCO processes likely will be used. RFFO is also working on a method to assess readiness to proceed. A process is being considered that categorizes rooms into 3-4 classes of hazard and risk. The appropriate hazard categories would bound the hazards and risks of a specific room. RFFO would assess readiness to proceed based on a review of performance in each hazard category.

SM Requal Program. SSOC has revised its SM qualification program to require an oral interview by the Facility Manager rather than a requalification board with three voting members. This appears to be a step backward. The site reps have been reporting a need for increased standards of qualification for building personnel for several months. In many cases, DOE's standard for Facility Rep qualification is higher than the standards required for Shift Managers. Shift Managers undergoing requalification have not exhibited a substantially higher level of knowledge than those applying for initial qualification. Additionally, reducing the rigor of the requal process is inconsistent with planned actions discussed between SSOC management and the site reps. K-H plans on addressing this issue, and has already issued a letter to SSOC requesting an explanation. The site reps will continue to follow and report on this issue.

cc: Board members