

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 9, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending August 9, 2024

Board Activity: On Tuesday, the Board received a remote briefing from Triad and NNSA personnel regarding efforts to improve glovebox safety in the Plutonium Facility in response to the Board's letter of April 10, 2024.

Legacy Facilities-Emergency Preparedness: On Monday, N3B personnel performed an emergency preparedness drill at Technical Area 21 (TA-21). The scenario had a fuel truck driver experience a medical episode and lose control of the vehicle, crashing into the Industrial Waste Line excavation site and later causing a fire. The Industrial Waste Lines are not being excavated yet; this drill was to support future operations. Overall response actions were satisfactory. However, the drill identified several areas to improve upon, notably communications methods and support for entry into TA-21 by outside emergency response organizations.

Plutonium Facility-Operations: On Thursday morning, workers in the Plutonium Facility reported unusual odors and observed vapors rising from a drain on the mezzanine level. Operations Center personnel entered the emergency response procedure for unusual odors. Initially personnel moved to the corridor opposite from the reported event. Due to the number of personnel present in the facility causing space constraints in the corridor, they performed a controlled expedited exit into a predetermined area where accountability and radiological surveys were conducted. Facility personnel later concluded that the most likely source of the vapor was a mispositioned bypass valve in a steam trap, which allowed steam to flow into the drain.

On Wednesday afternoon, the resident inspector joined Triad personnel on a routine safety walkdown of several laboratory rooms. In one room, they discovered a flammable materials storage cabinet packed with items that appeared to be waste, containers labeled as radioactive, and containers that were not stored upright. There was also an oily film present in the cabinet indicating spills or leakage.

Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building (CMR): In May, following reliability issues with the safety-significant hot cell door interlocks, CMR personnel declared the system inoperable and placed the west wing of hot cells out of service. Last Wednesday, a system engineer at CMR identified that the west bank hot cell corridor door was open. Routine work had been performed in the hot cell corridor while it was out of service. This work had not been performed in accordance with all requirements of the limiting condition for operations associated with inoperable hot cell interlocks. Radiological control personnel were present and no individuals entering the area protected by the interlock received any excessive dose. There are no plans to repair this system, and corrective actions to avoid work outside of controls are under development.