

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 14, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: D. Gutowski, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Activity Report for the Week Ending June 14, 2024

Plutonium Facility–Operations: Last week, facility personnel restored the impaired trolley line to service (see 5/10/2024 report). They developed and implemented a fix to the power transmission system that involved less invasive entry into the trolley tunnel. However, a more permanent repair to damaged components is still being planned. Meanwhile, a new bagout port has been installed in a contamination control tent in one of the rooms that was impacted by the trolley impairment. This can support material movements in the event of future trolley issues and will provide additional ability to remove combustible items from the glovebox lines. The dropboxes in the wing impacted by the degraded trolley have been accumulating excessive combustibles while the ability to move such items was limited.

Plutonium Facility–Fire Protection: During a routine walkdown with Triad personnel, the resident inspector questioned the presence of approximately 16 recently changed air filters in plastic bags on the floor of a filter room posted with significantly lower combustible control limits. Following a filter changeout, the filters cannot be removed from the area until cleared by radiological control personnel. Facility personnel are evaluating whether metal sided boxes can be used in the future to stage filters and mitigate combustible accumulation when the filters are not able to be promptly removed from an area following changeout.

Plutonium Facility–Continuous Improvement: On Monday, Weapons Production and Plutonium Infrastructure management held their first joint quarterly safety pause. Following the pause in March (3/29/2024), senior management decided it would be beneficial to hold a routine quarterly safety pause to reinforce expectations and discuss recent events. Safety topics included a recent skin contamination event (see 6/7/2024 report), radiological control practices, and pre-job briefing expectations.

Plutonium Facility–Safety Basis: On Wednesday, the NNSA Field Office approved closure of a condition of approval for the Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation associated with the pyrophoric event involving the bonecrusher last year (see 11/10, 12/1, 12/15 reports). Triad personnel have incorporated operational restrictions on bonecrusher operations into formal processes and procedures. An administrative procedure now defines the process for developing feed lists and establishes limitations on processing of feed materials that could cause unplanned energetic reactions.

Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility (WCRRF): Last week, Triad commenced a management self-assessment for restart of WCRRF as a hazard category 3 nuclear facility supporting size reduction of gloveboxes removed from the Plutonium Facility. The onsite portion of the assessment concluded this week. Contractor and federal readiness assessments are planned for later this year.

On Thursday, the NNSA Field Office transmitted the NNSA headquarters approval of an exemption request from the contractor regarding non-compliant fire department access to WCRRF. This included ten conditions of approval. A temporary equivalency on this subject had been approved in 2017, but NNSA personnel believed it would be more appropriate for the contractor to request a permanent exemption as there are no plans to widen roads for fire department access.