

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 1, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director

FROM: C. H. Keilers, Jr.

SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 1, 2006

On Wednesday, the staff held a video-teleconference with LANL on institutional safety programs.

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): LANL now expects to propose the upgraded TA-55 safety basis in early November; it will retain primary reliance on passive confinement as safety-class. Next week, LANL starts the confinement ventilation evaluation, per DOE's 04-2 implementation plan and assuming ventilation is safety-significant; the evaluation is due in mid-November. The selection as safety-significant is based on analyses that used non-physical assumptions and that may have considerably under-estimated confinement ventilation effectiveness (ref: Board ltr 5/31/05, site rep weekly 6/16/06).

Waste Operations: LANL resumed transuranic (TRU) debris waste shipments to WIPP last week. LANL has also proposed a safety strategy that involves using the WCRR drum repackaging facility and the RANT shipping facility to remediate and ship the above-ground higher activity drums off-site in 2007 and to support shipping the remainder of the 50,000 drums off-site during the next 4 years. The 325 above-ground higher activity drums (56 Ci or greater) constitute about 50 kCi, which is a third of the current above-ground TRU waste inventory; there are another ~300 higher activity drums with 90 kCi below ground. LANL expects to propose RANT and WCRR safety basis upgrades in October and the Area G safety basis update toward the end of 2006 (site rep weekly 7/21/06).

Integrated Safety Management: As a result of 3 near-misses, LANL held a series of employee and subcontractor meetings last week focused on electrical safety; the emphasis is on work planning and work control from the Integrated Work Management (IWM) process, particularly the roles of the person-in-charge, the plan-of-the-day, and management review and work release (site rep weekly 8/18/06). LANL has also been steadily working to improve its lock-out tag-out program and, more recently, has pursued issues with control of cranes with maintenance and inspection discrepancies.

Institutional Safety Programs: On Aug 17th, LANL submitted to NNSA an updated integrated corrective action plan, in response to last year's two Type B investigations and DOE-SP review; the plan includes developing a lab-wide IWM implementation improvement plan in January 2007. LANL has also assigned clear responsibilities for institutional safety programs to associate directors and has reiterated its commitment for achieving mature programs. Key elements include (a) an integrated set of manuals for operations, engineering, training, and maintenance, and (b) the facility operations directors as the lab's agents for consistent implementation of the institutional safety programs.

While the scope of the effort has been well studied (e.g., by the Operational Efficiency Project), the cost and implementation schedule remain undefined due to the FY-07 budget situation; LANL expects better definition in the next 4 to 8 weeks (site rep weeklies 8/4/06, 7/7/06, 6/9/09, 5/31/06, 4/21/06).

Contractor Assurance System (CAS): LANL expects the LANS Board of Governors to take action by Sep 12th on a proposed CAS description. This week, 2 LANS corporate assess/improve/modernize (AIM) teams were on site reviewing electrical safety, and nuclear and high hazard operations.

Conduct of Engineering: LANL has assigned a site chief engineer and is developing a network and procedures for the independent design authority function, which has not existed here in recent years.