

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 3, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: T. D. Burns Jr. and C. H. Keilers, Jr.
SUBJECT: Los Alamos Report for Week Ending September 3, 2004

Management: The New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) has released for 30-day public comment a proposed, legally-enforceable consent order for LANL cleanup by 2015. The consent order arose from 2 years of negotiations, stemming from an NMED draft order issued in May 2002.

Resumption Status: LANL has binned the remaining resumption effort into 26 moderate-risk (Level-2) and 15 higher-risk (Level-3) activities. LANL has resumed none of the Level-3 and three of the Level-2 activities, mainly classified computing and some non-nuclear light-lab work. The Resumption Review Board (RRB) is now reviewing management self-assessment (MSA) reports for 7 more Level-2 activities, including limited TA-18 work. Schedule pressure on the MSA teams and the RRB is intense. That said, MSA teams are generally doing a thorough job identifying issues, and RRB feedback has led some MSA teams to revise and improve their reports. LANL expects the first four Level-3 readiness assessments (RAs) for nuclear activities to begin the week of 9/13 and to cover the tritium facility (WETF), radiography facility, waste and characterization operations, and packaging and transportation. Schedules are still fluid, and several RA schedules appear overly optimistic.

Integrated Safety Management: LANL continues to actively refine its draft integrated work management procedure, intended to replace the current interim process, and expects to issue the final procedure and begin training and implementation within a couple of months, at earliest. Most resumption MSAs should be done by then. LANL anticipates that these MSAs will confirm that the work control issues are due more to incomplete implementation than to the process; however, the final procedure and its implementation can be adjusted if the MSA results indicate otherwise.

Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE): LANSCE has released its investigation report on two workers who discovered last March that they were working in an uncontrolled, unrecognized high radiation area and exited (site rep weekly 3/12/04). The report identifies inadequate implementation of work control as the root cause, and that lessons learned from similar previous events had not been incorporated. LANL is pursuing corrective actions, including evaluating engineered controls.

NNSA and LANL are considering re-categorizing LANSCE Lujan Center and 1L Target activities from Level-3 to Level-2, which would reduce the institutional scrutiny before resumption. While LANSCE management has been responsive to safety issues, LANSCE appears to also have many of the same risk indicators as other activities ranked at Level-3 (e.g., multiple tenants and customers; recent accidents or near-misses; and full range of hazards- radiological, electrical, high explosive). LANSCE would be the only LANL nuclear facility that does not receive the institutional scrutiny from a Level 3 RA. It is not intuitively obvious that this re-categorization is appropriate.

Plutonium Facility (TA-55): On Wednesday, TA-55 dropped an empty Type B shipping container while removing it from a shipping cradle. Operators properly stopped work. Damage was superficial. The operators had just dry-run placement of the container horizontally onto the cradle as part of a verification to support the MOX program (site rep weekly 8/13/04). The forklift operator then lifted the container and may have inadvertently released it when he intended instead to rotate it to vertical, due possibly to equipment failure. TA-55 found that the collocation of certain forklift controls increased potential for dropping the container (i.e., positive USQ) and is modifying the forklift.