

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 24, 1999

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
K. Fortenberry, Deputy Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, D. J. Grover, RFETS Site Representatives
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending November 26, 1999

Don Owen and Dave Grover will be out of the office on Friday this week.

Recommendation 94-1. As noted in RFETS site rep. reports of October 15 and 22, 1999, due to issues with certification of the 9975 shipping container, DOE-RFFO has been evaluating options for disposition of the 317 kg of bulk plutonium fluoride residues. This material was to be stabilized at RFETS and then shipped to the Savannah River Site (SRS) by September 2000 per the DOE Implementation Plan for Recommendation 94-1. DOE-RFFO has now recommended to DOE Headquarters that a "dual path" approach be taken to package the fluorides to meet shipping and disposal requirements for both SRS and for WIPP. This approach will involve calcining the higher purity plutonium fluoride material (180 kg bulk containing 82% of the plutonium) followed by blending with sand, slag and crucible material and calcium oxide to less than 10 % plutonium. The blended material is expected to be able to be shipped in 9975 containers to SRS. The remaining lower purity material (137 kg bulk containing 18 % of the plutonium) would be blended as necessary, packaged in Pipe Overpack Containers (POCs) and shipped to WIPP. As a backup, all the blended material could be packaged in POCs and shipped to WIPP.

DOE-RFFO indicated that shipments to SRS would not be completed until August 2001. DOE-RFFO has requested that DOE Headquarters provide direction on this issue by November 30, 1999. (3-A)

Adherence to Safety Controls/Conduct of Operations. As reported in recent site rep reports, DOE-RFFO and RFETS contractor management have noted a trend of increasing problems with adherence to safety controls and with conduct of operations in general during the last few months. Various actions are underway to address these issues.

An occurrence late last week in Building 371 illustrates some of the conduct of operations, supervisory technical vigilance, and overall safety management problems being observed at RFETS. While performing a forklift movement of a 2800 lb milling machine from a loading dock to a storage location in the building, the milling machine tipped over on to the floor. No one was injured. Investigation identified the following: (1) the lift was incorrectly treated as a "routine" operation; procedures call for lifts such as this one to be specifically planned (i.e., perform a job hazard analysis), (2) the forklift capacity was only 2000 lb and the forklift operator did not ascertain the load weight in violation of a key protocol for all lifts that he was trained on just the prior week, (3) there was no supervision of the activity, and (4) there have been multiple lifting/hoisting mishaps during the past year; one essentially identical to this occurrence. (1-C)
cc Board Members