

**DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD**

December 23, 1999

**TO:** G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director  
K. Fortenberry, Deputy Technical Director  
**FROM:** D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative  
**SUBJECT:** RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending December 24, 1999

Dave Grover was out of the office this week.

**Adherence to Safety Controls/Conduct of Operations.** As discussed in site rep. reports of November 12 and 19, 1999, DOE-RFFO and RFETS contractor management have noted a trend of increasing problems with adherence to authorization basis (AB) safety controls and with conduct of operations in general during the last few months. DOE-RFFO had formally requested that Kaiser-Hill determine the cause of the AB violations and report on corrective actions taken by Kaiser-Hill to address the violations. Kaiser-Hill has since identified the primary causes as lack of management focus on adherence to AB safety controls, ineffective corrective actions and lack of accountability for violations. A number of mostly short-term actions have been taken by Kaiser-Hill and their sub-contractors. Other long-term actions are being developed.

Late last week, DOE-RFFO issued a Preliminary Notice of Non-Compliance stating these violations indicate a programmatic breakdown of AB management as provided for in nuclear facility Authorization Agreements between DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill. The preliminary notice stated that Kaiser-Hill has 30 days to provide a response. DOE-RFFO will evaluate the need to issue a formal notice based on the Kaiser-Hill response due in mid-January. (1-C)

**RFETS Year 2000 (Y2K) Preparations.** RFETS plans to shutdown all nuclear operations by December 30, and is taking a number of measures to secure nuclear material and to minimize the potential for contamination spread should an extended power outage occur during the Y2K transition. RFETS has completed a series of drills to test backup power, contingency response and backup communications with satisfactory results. Staffing at the plant from December 31 to January 3 will be limited to designated personnel, and status information will be periodically provided via pager to RFETS emergency response personnel. On January 3, controlled entry procedures are to be used for nuclear facilities if conditions warrant. (1-C)

**Sand, Slag, and Crucible (SS&C) Residues.** SS&C is currently being stored in anticipation of shipment to WIPP. As noted in the August 27, 1999 site rep. report, RFETS has been determining whether the produce cans and nylon bags used in the storage of SS&C adequately vent hydrogen. Testing of the cans and bags, conducted with a 4% hydrogen gas at atmospheric pressure, showed a wide variability in hydrogen diffusion through the bags and cans. RFETS personnel indicated the test results may not support obtaining approval for SS&C shipment in the TRUPAC-II without repacking the entire SS&C inventory into vented containers. No evidence of can pressurization has been observed during inspection of SS&C to date. RFETS is considering other actions to avoid complete inventory repacking. (3-A)

cc: Board Members