

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 16, 2001

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending August 17, 2001

The site rep. was out of the office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). Stabilization and packaging operations resumed this week following maintenance and testing of the laser welder that performs the DOE-STD-3013 inner can weld (see last week's report). No specific cause of the welder failures was identified, but a number of maintenance items were performed (adjustments, part replacements, etc.) that resulted in at least 10 consecutive, satisfactory inner can welds. Kaiser-Hill is considering requiring additional periodic maintenance for the laser equipment.

As of this report, plutonium metal and oxide has been packaged into 45 DOE-STD-3013 containers since initial PuSPS startup on June 14th. This week, Kaiser-Hill authorized full simultaneous (metal and oxide) operations in PuSPS. The senior supervisory watch for PuSPS will continue for at least seven days of operation and until senior management in Building 371 authorizes its termination. (3-A)

Response to the Board Letter of March 23, 2001. This letter forwarded observations on safety management at RFETS following Building 707 thermal stabilization activities where unusual furnace glovebox pressure fluctuations were observed with subsequent determination that an authorization basis (AB) safety control (to sample and characterize feed material) was not being implemented. The Board asked that the DOE Office of Environmental Management (DOE-EM) inform the Board of corrective actions identified by DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill as a result of this event. On August 7th, DOE-EM transmitted the RFETS response to the Board that includes DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill corrective actions.

This week, the site rep. and staff discussed the status of the corrective actions in the RFETS response with DOE-RFFO and Kaiser-Hill management:

- Kaiser-Hill actions to document lessons learned from the event and factor those lessons learned into training and procedures are complete. The staff is being provided relevant documentation.
- The action to incorporate feed material sampling requirements into the Building 371 Basis for Interim Operation (BIO) and operating procedures, while reported to the Board as complete, has not been done and is not expected to be completed until January 2002 (the BIO currently authorizes stabilization of only relatively pure plutonium oxides in PuSPS).
- Certain actions for DOE-RFFO are delayed: (1) to establish protocols for DOE subject matter experts in providing recommendations (or technical direction) and (2) to establish a requirement for DOE-RFFO to be notified upon cancellation of procedures containing AB safety controls.

DOE-RFFO management stated that DOE-RFFO will provide DOE-EM and the staff a revised schedule for completion of the actions. The site rep. and staff will continue to follow execution of the actions in the RFETS response. (1-C)