

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 24, 2001

TO: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. F. Owen, RFETS Site Representative
SUBJECT: RFETS Activity Report for the Week Ending August 24, 2001

Plutonium Stabilization and Packaging System (PuSPS). Stabilization and packaging operations were interrupted Wednesday and Thursday of this week upon discovery that the outer can welds for several completed DOE-STD-3013 containers did not meet dimensional requirements. Specifically, the dimension from the top of the outer can cap to the weld centerline was larger (by less than 0.010 inch) than the allowable range (0.1475 - 0.1675 inch). This weld issue was traced to the adjustment of the mechanical stop that positions the outer can for welding. This issue was not discovered until at least 8 DOE-STD-3013 containers with this problem had been completed. PuSPS management is considering measures to ensure the outer can weld dimensional inspections are done in a more timely manner.

The site rep. observed PuSPS operations including unpacking of oxide feed material in the Material Preparation Glovebox. Normally, the oxide feed comes to the PuSPS packed in two nested metal cans; however, for one feed batch the inner container was plastic. PuSPS personnel appropriately stopped the operation, notified Building 371 management, obtained multi-disciplined review and received approval to proceed with further unpacking and material preparation. The site rep. considers this an example of proper conduct of operations upon encountering an unexpected situation. (3-A)

Component Procurement/Receipt Inspection. As reported on July 13th, it was discovered that suspect/counterfeit electrical circuit breakers were installed (but not used) in a nuclear material assay system in Building 371. Late last week, Kaiser-Hill completed an investigation of this issue under their Price Anderson Amendments Act Program. The investigation concluded that the receipt inspector, upon identifying suspect indications (evidence of prior use), did not label/tag the circuit breakers with a non-conformance report (NCR) as required. Instead, the parts were labeled/tagged and segregated with another deficiency identification that did not require the level of review that an NCR requires prior to releasing the parts for use.

The investigation team recommended several actions dealing with clarifying the NCR process and improving NCR process training. Kaiser-Hill line management will determine their corrective actions and brief DOE-RFFO by mid-September. The site rep. noted to DOE-RFFO management that recent Board Public Meetings have addressed related quality assurance issues across the DOE complex and that information from these meetings may be useful in efforts on this event. (1-C)

DOE-RFFO Management. The site rep. met with the new Acting Deputy Manager (who is on a temporary assignment from WIPP) and the new Acting Assistant Manager for Safety Programs. The site rep. discussed issues dealing with plutonium processing under Recommendation 94-1, Board correspondence dealing with RFETS, and other items noted in recent site rep. reports.

cc: Board Members