

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 2, 2000

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director

FROM: M. Sautman and S. Stokes, Hanford Site Representatives

SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending June 2, 2000

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): An oxidation reaction occurred Thursday night while preparing a plutonium metal item for thermal stabilization. The item involved was reportedly one of the items that had shown accelerating weight gains during storage. The cans were opened without incident. When the ingot and associated corrosion products were poured into the boat, the ingot began to oxidize. Photos show a red glow coming from the ingot similar to a piece of charcoal. Small embers occasionally popped off. As required by procedure, operators placed the lid over the boat to reduce the availability of oxygen, placed the boat in the middle of the glovebox, protected the glovebox gloves, and established a fire watch. The operators would periodically lift the lid with welders' gloves to monitor the reaction. After 4 hours, the reaction ended. Only about 25% of the plutonium remained as metal. Although the boat warmed up, there was no damage to the boat. There was no flash or any other indication that plutonium hydride was present. This was not an unanticipated event and operators had been trained how to keep the reaction under control. This item will be stabilized in a furnace shortly. Thermal stabilization of the plastic item discussed last week was completed without incident. (3-A)

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP) Funding: SNFP management recently transferred \$9.7 million of contingency funds to the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility (CVDF) to support the remaining construction testing and its engineering support. This was necessary due to an inadvertent omission of this work scope from the 1998 baseline. Additionally, the organization being used to support the remaining testing will change from the construction contractor, Grant Construction, to Fluor Federal Services in conjunction with CVDF operations. (1-C)

C. Facility Representative Program: Keith Klein approved an Operations Oversight Division proposal that will make all currently qualified Richland Office facility representatives GS-14 grade. At the same time, the facility representative program will be reduced by 5 full-time equivalents to 20 positions. This reduction will be addressed by currently unfilled positions, recent transfers and attrition. Future facility representatives will be hired as GS 13/14 and will become GS 14 upon initial qualification. (1-B)

cc: Board members