

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 3, 2006

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: R. Quirk and W. Linzau, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Activity Report for the Week Ending February 3, 2006

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): The site rep observed inspections for compliance with the criticality safety program (CSP) in several rooms of the Plutonium Process Support Laboratory (PPSL). The inspections are corrective actions for recent problems with criticality safety non-conformance (see Hanford Activity Report 1/17/06). The observed portions of the CSP inspections were conducted in a thorough manner. The site rep observed that the housekeeping in the PPSL was less than adequate and resulted in unnecessary fire hazards. PFP management promptly directed an inspection and cleanup of the rooms. The periodic fire loading inspection of the room had been completed earlier in the week with no problems identified. This raises questions of the thoroughness of the fire loading inspections.

K Basin Closure (KBC) Project: A worker was injured in K East (KE) Basin during cleanup activities. The injury occurred when a worker slipped while using a scaffolding pole to separate the grating to allow the movement of a long handled tool. Prying the gratings apart was not addressed in work procedures but was reported to be a relatively common practice for many years. KBC project management was not aware of the practice but has instructed that prying the grating apart shall not be done until an engineered solution is developed. This was the second injury in KE Basin in just over a week (see Hanford Activity Report 1/20/2006).

Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP): The site rep met with the WTP construction manager and interim welding manager to discuss the result of the recent root cause analysis for welding deficiencies that occurred during the last two years. The analysis revealed one root cause and two contributing causes. The root cause was management's desire for efficiency that conflicted with the implementation of verbatim compliance with requirements. The contractor is planning a number of corrective actions, including new training procedures and instituting management surveillance of welding activities. Also, additional reviews of the welding program are being performed by off-project experts and a position for a permanent welding manager has been posted.

Washington Closure Hanford (WCH): The site rep observed work during the removal activities of two ion exchangers (IXs) from Building 327 (see Hanford Activity Report 1/13/2006). Both IXs were successfully retrieved from the basins without incident. Weaknesses were noted during the pre-job briefing and field activities. During the pre-job briefing, the person in charge relied too heavily on the operators and radiological technicians, who appeared knowledgeable and experienced in this type of work. The same weakness could also be seen during work activities. WCH management were aware of the weakness and they have committed to conduct supervisor safety training and hire qualified supervisors as work ramps up.

cc: Board Members