

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 17, 2006

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: R. Quirk and W. Linzau, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending March 17, 2006

Outside expert D. Boyd was on-site assisting in a Plutonium Finishing Plant conduct of operations review.

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): The site reps and outside expert conducted a review of conduct of operations at PFP this week. The review included observations of deactivation and dismantlement (D&D) activities, fissile material moves, pre- and post-job briefings, shift turnover meetings, and operations in the shift supervisor's office. Some of the initial observations that require follow-up were the inconsistent use of formal communications, the unclear supervisory responsibility when the field work supervisor (person-in-charge) is not at work site, and the effectiveness of using e-mail to disseminate management policy changes. The continued use of senior supervisory watch to monitor activities appeared to be effective in reinforcing management expectations of conduct of operations and safety practices.

The review also included the observation of the Conduct of Operations Center of Expertise monthly meeting. The meetings have been held since September 2005, but a mission statement has not been finalized. The slow progress may be attributable to the lack of a full-time conduct of operations champion.

Tank Farms: The Executive Safety Review Board of CH2MHill Hanford Group (CHG) formally approved the designation of catch tank ER-311 as an assumed leaker (see last week's Activity Report) and Washington State officials are being notified. Based on updated information, it is estimated that the tank has approximately 400 gallons of waste, of which at most half could be retrieved by pumping. The leak rate is estimated to be approximately 0.5 gallons/day. As a result of the issues raised during the review of ER-311, CHG is evaluating if they should lower the level change threshold for initiating the leak assessment process because more accurate level monitoring systems are available. CHG is also reviewing the records of similar isolated tanks to determine the extent of condition.

Valve lineups and similar actions related to the startup of the 242-A evaporator were initiated this week. The site reps conducted a walk-down of the facility to observe readiness preparations and noted a significant number of active alarms on the monitoring display in the evaporator control room. Most of the alarms were associated with non-evaporator systems, such as double-shell tank ventilation system status. This condition was raised with CHG management and they are taking corrective actions.

Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP): The Office of River Protection (ORP) has given formal direction to Bechtel National, Inc. (BNI) to implement the contractor requirements of DOE Order 226.1.