DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 21, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending August 21, 1998

Staff member Ralph Arcaro was on site Monday through Thursday assisting with site representative duties.

A. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): This week, DOE-RL met with the local Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) representatives to continue negotiations over the SNFP schedule and related Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) milestones. This meeting is a continuation of the dispute resolution process invoked by EPA earlier this month. It is expected that EPA will issue a proposed schedule that reflects an acceleration of project milestones relative to the "high confidence" baseline implemented by the contractor in June.

In the meantime, DOE-RL has forwarded comments from the Baseline Review Board (BRB) to the contractor for action. The BRB, which examined details of cost and schedule for each sub-project, found, among other things, inconsistencies in cost estimating and in the application of contingency. It is not clear that the BRB will issue a formal report, but the Board's Site Representative has requested a list of the BRB findings.

B. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) Projectization: On August 20, Messrs. Ogg and Arcaro met with representatives of DOE-RL and Babcock and Wilcox Hanford Co. (BWHC) to discuss the projectization and reorganization effort ongoing at PFP. The reorganization effort provides BWHC management the opportunity to incorporate systems engineering principles into the planning of PFP activities. BWHC has plans to do so, but the timing of their efforts is unclear. The Board's staff encouraged the use of systems engineering at PFP, and suggested that the most benefit can be gained by implementing systems engineering concepts early in the reorganization process.

C. Tank Farms Sampling Occurrence: On August 19, during rotary mode core sampling of Tank BY-105, a coupling attaching the drilling equipment to the hollow drill string came loose. Nitrogen at 50 psig, used to continuously purge the drill string during sampling, blew through the loose coupling for approximately 15 seconds. The inside of the drill string is contaminated as it is in direct communication with tank waste when the sampler is removed. The sampler was in the drill string at the time of the occurrence. The area surrounding the sampling equipment became contaminated. Additionally, one operator was discovered to have slightly contaminated clothing. This is the first instance of the coupling coming loose since rotary-mode sampling was approved in December 1997. It is not yet clear why the coupling came loose. Procedure or design modifications are being considered to prevent recurrence.

cc: Board members