

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 20, 1998

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: D. G. Ogg, Hanford Site Representative

SUBJ: Activity Report for Week Ending November 20, 1998

Staff member Dave Grover was on site this week assisting with site representative duties.

A. Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): On November 18, Mr. Ogg attended the PFP Quartet meeting with representatives from DOE-RL, Fluor Daniel Hanford (FDH) and B&W Hanford Co. (BWHC). The PFP Director stated that BWHC has issued corrective action plans for all ORR pre-start findings and that some of the corrective actions are complete. He estimated that all pre-start actions could be complete by November 30.

B. Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): Mr. Grover toured the K-East Basin and met with DOE-RL and SNFP personnel to discuss in-basin projects. New modeling of the Integrated Water Treatment System (IWTS) settling tanks has identified a potential for criticality resulting from the loss of basin water (as designed, the tanks will be in an over-moderated condition). Alternatives are being considered to add neutron moderating materials (compensating for water loss), redesign the settling tanks, or reduce the over-conservatism in the criticality models. The latter option would require a DOE waiver.

Work control in the K-Basins continues to be a concern. Fluor Daniel Northwest (FDNW) failed to resolve work control and conduct of operations issues to the satisfaction of the SNFP this week. As a result, underwater work continues to be prohibited. FDNW will try to resolve these issues by November, 23, 1998.

C. Tank C-106 Sluicing: On November 18, Lockheed Martin Hanford Co. (LMHC) workers successfully began sluicing tank C-106 using liquid wastes from tank AY-102. However, after 2 ½ hours of sluicing, operators stopped the procedure when ventilation exhaust monitors indicated volatile organic compounds (VOCs) at levels up to 450 ppm. Some workers may have been exposed to the vapors and 10 personnel were sent for medical screening. To date, no medical problems have been reported. The sluicing procedure remains on hold while LMHC engineers assess the source of the VOCs and determine potential mitigative actions.

D. Enforcement Letter: On November 16, the DOE-HQ Office of Enforcement and Investigation (EH-10) issued an Enforcement Letter to FDH concerning quality assurance (QA) deficiencies within the SNFP. EH-10 acknowledged the efforts of FDH to implement a new quality improvement plan (QIP), and decided to defer any enforcement action until EH-10 makes an assessment of the effectiveness of the QIP in approximately four months.

cc: Board members