

pany's treasurer. While noting that there were not any questionable actions on the part of the chairman, DOE's IG

said the position should be filled by someone from the outside or part of an independent organization.

AT LOS ALAMOS LAB INSTALLS SEISMIC CUTOFFS IN PLUTONIUM FACILITY

Los Alamos National Laboratory has completed installation of seismic shutoff systems on the non-safety-related electrical systems in the lab's PF-4 plutonium facility, meeting one of the key milestones in a series of near-term upgrades to the building. The shutdown systems are part of a plan developed by the lab and the National Nuclear Security Administration to respond to concerns by the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board that the building was vulnerable in the event of a major earthquake. The worst-case accident scenario involves an earthquake strong enough to breach the lab's heavy concrete containment building while simultaneously igniting a fire that could then disperse dangerous doses of plutonium off of the lab site.

The shutoffs, required to be completed by the end of March, are the latest milestone in the lab's response to the DNFSB's Recommendation 2009-2. Issued in October

2009, the recommendation noted that a worst-case earthquake-fire scenario could lead to an off-site radiation exposure 100 times the Department of Energy's allowable limits. A long exchange between the Board and the lab ensued, which led to the July 2010 Implementation Plan outlining a series of steps and milestones aimed at reducing risk at PF-4, the lab's primary plutonium work area, where pit manufacturing and other mission-critical nuclear work is done.

According to a recent report from the Board, the cutoff switches were installed and went through preliminary testing in mid-February. Test performance data will be reviewed before the system is made operational, which the lab hopes to have completed in time for the March 31 deadline so that the new system can be accounted for in the lab's planned May 2011 update of the PF-4 Documented Safety Analysis.

AT OAK RIDGE ORNL'S HFIR BUILT TO WITHSTAND 7.0 QUAKE

An Oak Ridge National Laboratory official said the lab's High Flux Isotope Reactor, one of the world's most powerful research reactors, was designed and built to withstand an earthquake in the range of 6.0-7.0 on the Richter scale, believed to be about the most significant earthquake that could hit East Tennessee. The questions came to the fore in light of the massive earthquake and tsunami in Japan and subsequent problems with several of the country's nuclear reactors. Tim Powers, a division director at ORNL, said the High Flux Isotope Reactor is a lot different than the nuclear power reactors in Japan. "We're much smaller than the reactors in Japan," he said, noting that the fuel core of a power reactor is about a thousand times heavier than the one at HFIR. The operating power level at HFIR is 85 megawatts, compared to about 1,380 megawatts at the Japanese reactors, and the ORNL reactor operates at 155 degrees Fahrenheit, com-

pared to about 500 degrees for one of the Japanese reactors, he said.

Powers also said that the HFIR was designed to withstand a .15G earthquake, which is roughly in the range of 6.0-7.0 on the Richter scale. "It's not quite an apples-to-apples comparison," he said of the two seismic standards. The first number refers to acceleration and the movement of things, while the Richter scale is based more on energy released, he said. He said the Oak Ridge research reactor's safety is based on what's considered the maximum earthquake for the area. And, Powers noted, unlike Japan, "There are no tsunamis in Tennessee." The HFIR was built in the 1960s, but it has been upgraded and modernized through multiple projects, and ORNL officials have said they expect it to operate for another 30-40 years. ■

Wrap Up

IN THE INDUSTRY

Donna Hampton, who headed up the shared services initiative at the Y-12 National Security Complex and the Pantex Plant, has been hired as the head of Human Resources at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Hampton spearheaded the effort to consolidate administra-

tive services between Y-12 and Pantex, and led the human resources offices at both sites for contractor Babcock & Wilcox in recent years. She replaces Ben Glover, who left the laboratory to pursue other interests. She will begin her new position March 28.

Carolyn Zerkle has been named as Los Alamos National Laboratory's new Associate Director for Infor-