

DOE Assigns Two New Representatives to TA-55

The Los Alamos Operations Office assigns facility representatives to critical sites. Rudy Valdez and Johnnie Nevarez are the new DOE facility representatives at TA-55. Omega West, TA-18,



Johnnie Nevarez



Rudy Valdez

LAMPF, TA-54, CMR, and the tritium facilities also have facility representatives. The Defense Nuclear Safety Board encouraged DOE to have a greater presence in nuclear facilities since they are the owner. This presence is particularly needed at TA-55 because it is a high-visibility facility with more than 2,000 visitors per year.

The DOE representatives

work with Del Harbur, the landlord of the facility, to keep the facility operating. Their responsibilities include

- coordinating visits from DOE representatives,
- serving as the eyes and ears of the DOE area manager, and
- serving as a sounding board for questions and concerns, particularly about DOE orders.

As owners, they are accountable for the operation of TA-55 and must be kept informed of all things at all times. They emphasize that they are sailing on the same ship and are as interested as anyone here that the ship stay afloat.

The DOE representatives are responsible for more than ES&H, although this is their first priority. They are also responsible for oversight of facility operations, including training, management, administration, and shipping.

Since Rudy and Johnnie are new to the facility, they are still learning how the facility operates and who the points of contact are for all the activities in the facility. They are completing the site-specific training and walking through the procedures. As they do this, they are noting whether existing rules and procedures comply with federal regulations. They also use the occurrence reporting system as a primary source of information. Their objective is not to write rules or to merely ensure compliance, but to look for ways of improving operations at the facility.

They conduct walk-throughs to acquaint themselves with the facility and to help people prepare for the annual DOE assessments and other audits. They want to be put to work and welcome involvement in process development.

Rudy and Johnnie are both graduates of New Mexico State University. Rudy's background is in Industrial Engineering. He worked at the Laboratory for ten years before joining DOE. For four of those years he was a staff member with the Laboratory Safety Office. He is in his tenth year with DOE. He spent more than eight of those years in the ES&H branch. When he was assigned to S Site in early 1991, he became the first facility representative for DOE in Los Alamos. He also served as a counterpart to the Tiger Team.

Johnnie graduated from NMSU in May of 1991. His background is in Electrical Engineering. He was an engineering field inspector at the Nevada Test Site on a co-op student assignment. He also worked for the Atmospheric Science Laboratory at White Sands. He joined DOE in July of 1991. As a collateral duty, he is the "Leadership through Quality" coordinator for the Los Alamos Area Office.

The DOE representatives and the management of TA-55 have a common goal — to make TA-55 the premier nuclear facility in DOE. The representatives feel this goal is well within the reach of the facility. They hear many positive remarks about TA-55 and can see that those who work here take pride in what they do.

Lorenzo Trujillo Accepts Spill Coordinator Post

Lorenzo Trujillo recently accepted the position of TA-55 spill coordinator. He was asked to do the job because of his background in waste management. His new assignment fits in well with his current responsibilities as the liquid waste management coordinator.



Lorenzo Trujillo

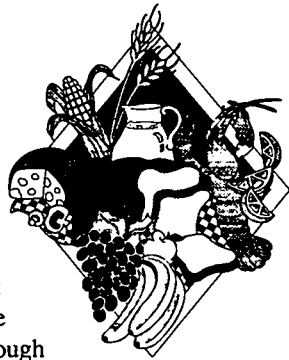
Lorenzo thought this additional assignment would be interesting, but he's been a little surprised about the amount of time the job requires. He just completed the 200 hour Hazardous Materials Technician/Specialist course through the Industrial Education Council (IEC). This council is affiliated with the University of California. The instructors say this course will soon become the national standard because it is designed to meet California's tough environmental regulations.

Lorenzo will also take the Laboratory's new Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) course when it is offered.

Lorenzo is already thinking of ways to improve the spill prevention and response efforts at TA-55. His contributions in this area will add to the long list of contributions he has made to the safe operation of TA-55.

To Your Good Health
March is Nutrition Month

TA-55 Cafeteria Offers Healthy Choices



Many TA-55 employees get at least one-third of their daily nutrition from the facility cafeteria. It's hard to wander through PF-1 in the mornings without being enticed by the smell of bacon. With so many people watching their diets, nutrition month might be a good time to look at some of the low-fat alternatives in the TA-55 cafeteria.

Favorites: Hector Hinojosa, the manager of the TA-55 cafeteria, says favorite breakfast items include fried eggs, chile, tortillas, hash browns, pancakes, and the breakfast burrito. The chile and tortillas are made at the central cafeteria. According to Ivy Barnes, a catering specialist at the cafeteria, the chile is prepared with 73% lean beef. Once the beef is browned, the fat is drained before the other ingredients are added. The tortillas are made using vegetable shortening instead of lard. Egg beaters are available on request for those with cholesterol problems. Hector uses soybean oil on the grill (as little as possible) and does the frying in vegetable oil.

Low Fat Choices: Low-fat breakfast choices include bagels, toast, oatmeal, dry cereals, atole, and fresh fruit. The bran muffins are made from an all-bran recipe that uses no eggs, but does have a little vegetable oil. Skim milk and yogurt are always available.

The vegetarian-vegetable soup is a good choice for a low-fat lunch. The salad bar can be low fat if you use the special dressings that are available. Watch out for the potato and macaroni salads if you're worried about fat, they have a regular salad dressing base. Vegetables at the steam table are prepared without butter.

Personal Choices: If you and some of your friends would like to see something special as a food item, the cafeteria can probably supply it. Make a list of those who want the item (there should be at least 8) and the day you want it. Give the list to Hector, and he will send the information to the central cafeteria. Some possibilities might be a low-fat fish entree or vegetarian tamales and chile.

Cafeteria Staff: Hector Hinojosa, Helen Atencio, Maria Trujillo, and Virginia Comito make up the cafeteria staff. Their day starts at 5:30 a.m. when they put on the coffee. Within minutes they become the first stop for many workers as they arrive at TA-55.



Helen Atencio, Hector Hinojosa, and Virginia Comito

The busiest breakfast hours are 6:30 to 8:00; the lunch crunch is from 11:15 to 12:15. They register about 400 transaction per day, with one-third being carry-out business. They're always busy — preparing, cooking, serving, or cleaning. If someone's out for the day, it is sometimes impossible to get a replacement with a clear-ance. Despite their busy schedule, customers are greeted with smiles, seasonal decorations, and flowers on the table. They appreciate their regular and loyal customers and provide quick service for those who have half-hour lunches. They are willing to accommodate your needs.



New Program Managers for TA-55 and Complex 21

Pillay Heads Waste Program at TA-55

Sam Pillay joined NMT-DO in December to become the Program Manager for Waste Minimization and Management at TA-55. His background in nuclear sciences includes extensive research and development efforts in environmental pollution and waste management. After coming to Los Alamos, he worked in the Nuclear Safeguards area for twelve years. During this time he participated in projects at almost all the sites in the DOE nuclear weapons complex, including Rocky Flats and TA-55.

Sam sees waste minimization and management as a national challenge, with the proper emphasis being on minimization. He believes TA-55 has the people to make significant contributions in this area.

As program manager he wants to provide leadership and nurture research and development efforts directed at achieving the goal of making TA-55 a zero environmental impact facility. The TA-55 managers are working with Sam to identify problems and come up with novel solutions.

Any solutions TA-55 develops for waste problems at this facility can be extended to plans for Complex 21. Sam is seeking suggestions from the entire NMT community to make TA-55 a model facility.



Sam Pillay

Complex 21

Complex 21 is DOE's plan for the nuclear weapons complex for the next century. The DOE complex has 14 sites, but some of these are now closed and are being cleaned up. Others will be closed in the future. As sites close, their functions have to be absorbed by the remaining complex so that the nation can keep a basic nuclear capability. In the twenty-first century, the nuclear weapons complex will be smaller, more efficient, and safer.

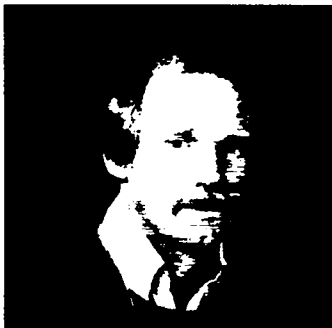
Los Alamos has been given the job of Lead Laboratory for several parts of Complex 21. As Program Managers for Complex 21, Warren Wood and Larry Austin coordinate and manage major components of this planning process. They oversee teams made up of representatives from all the laboratories and production facilities in the complex.

Wood Heads Plutonium Storage Program for Complex 21

Warren Wood became the Complex 21 Program Manager for Plutonium Storage in September. For two years before taking this assignment, Warren served as a Sector Leader for the Tiger Team, although he was still officially with NMT. Before that he was NMT-8 group leader and TA-55 facility manager for about six years.

The Plutonium Storage Program is planning a plutonium storage facility for the weapons complex. With the stockpile shrinking, it is important to have a facility where plutonium can be stored after the weapons have been dismantled. The facility will store the material until final disposition is determined, possibly 50 to 100 years.

First they must determine what will need to be stored — the quantity of material. Then they must determine how to package it for acceptable storage.



Warren Wood



Larry Austin

Warren will be looking to TA-55 to provide technical support in the design of the storage facility. Studies will be needed to decide the form the material has to be stored in and the kind of container that will be compatible with the material. Then prototypes will be developed.

The goal is to design a plutonium storage facility and have it operational by the year 2002.

Larry Austin Heads Plutonium Processing Program for Complex 21

Larry Austin became the Complex 21 Program Manager for Plutonium Processes in December. Prior to this he was the Group Leader of NMT-2 for seven years. Before coming to NMT, he started and led the robotics group.

The Plutonium Processing Program has the responsibility for developing Complex 21 plans for site returns — including disassembly, metal purification, and nitrate and chloride recovery.

Since TA-55 represents a microcosm of what is needed for Complex 21, Larry works with group leaders and technical staff at TA-55 to be sure their development projects fold into the needs of Complex 21.

The goal is to coordinate development efforts across the complex to ensure that plutonium processing technology for Complex 21 is safer, more efficient, produces less waste, and reduces radiation exposure to personnel.

These three new program managers will be working to improve the best technologies available today and to develop the new technologies needed for the nuclear weapons complex of the future.

New Committee Looks at Safety, Safeguards, and Security Concerns at TA-55

The Safety/Safeguards/Security Committee is one of two new TA-55 safety and advisory committees. The committee makes sure that safety, nuclear material safeguards, and security are all considered when work is planned or performed.

Membership

The Safety/Safeguards/Security Committee has representatives from Facilities Management (NMT-8), Nuclear Materials Measurement and Accountability (NMT-4), the TA-55 safety office, the TA-55 Emergency Response Team, Material Control and Accountability (OS-2), Physical Security and Safeguards (OS-10), the Emergency Management Office (EMO), Fire Protection (EMO/FP), Protection Technology Los Alamos (PTLA), the Los Alamos Fire Department, and the TA-55 Training Center (NMT-10).

Members of the committee include Pete Wallace (NMT-8), Gene Walter (NMT-1), Dennis Brandt (NMT-4), Relf Price (NMT-4), Ron Stafford (NMT-8), Jeff Whicker (HS-1), Bruce Erkkila (OS-2), Gene Dashner (OS-10), Patrick Trujillo (OS-10), David Castaneda (PTLA), Michael Thorne (PTLA), Doug Tuggle (NMT-8), Jim Griffith (EMO), Larry Norris (LA County Fire Dept.), and Ray Tell (ENG-8).

Contacts

The chair of this committee is Pete Wallace. He can be reached at 7-2556 if you have questions or concerns you would like to bring to the attention of the committee.



Duties

Safety issues include

emergency evacuation plans,
orderly exit plans,
emergency responder training,
evacuation assembly areas,
emergency drills,
incident command authority,
incident debriefings,
incident reports, and
lessons learned.

Safeguards issues include all aspects of special nuclear materials (SNM) protection and nuclear material measurement and accountability.

Security issues include

protocols for armed responses,
security station orders, and
security barriers.

Coming Features:

- New Team Leaders
- Lessons Learned from TA-55 Incidents
- Dave Olivas and glovebox gloves
- ALARA Committee

We want your ideas:

You are invited to submit ideas and suggestions for this bulletin.

We are making a specific request for stories about TA-55 employees who have used their safety training away from work.

Send ideas to Joan Farnum, MS E500, or leave her a note and she will call you.

David Huerta Learns to Meet Emergencies at Work and in His Community

How is working as a technician in PF-4 like being an Emergency Medical Technician? David Huerta of NMT-5 knows the answer — he does both. He must be meticulous in both jobs, follow procedures exactly, and communicate carefully.

So why does he spend every other weekend working as an EMT for the Espanola Hospital Ambulance Service? The work gets him outside, exploring all kinds of places and meeting all kinds of people — it's interesting and exciting.



David Huerta, second from left, serving as a member of the TA-55 ERT during an exercise

Becoming an EMT and a Member of the ERT

David became interested in emergency medical care because of his children. He decided to take a basic first aid course on his own so he would be prepared for emergencies with them. But then he wanted to know more.

Next he took the TA-55 Emergency Response Team (ERT) 40 hour First Responder class, which heightened his interest. Then he decided to take the 120 hour basic EMT class at the Espanola Hospital on his own.

At the end of the EMT class he passed the state exam and a series of skill station tests and got his EMT license. Then the Director of the Espanola Hospital Ambulance Service contacted him and asked if he would like to work occasionally. He began by working one day per month to get some practical hands-on experience. He now works every other weekend which adds up to about 48 hours per month at the hospital and more hours on-call.

David became increasingly involved in the TA-55 ERT. After he got his basic license, NMT-5 sponsored him to complete the 120 additional hours of training required to move up to the EMTI level. This is an "IV Tech," a medical technician who has the authority to start intravenous fluids. He also has authority to administer two drugs. One is for narcotic overdose, and the other is for diabetic hypoglycemia.

Always Something New to Learn

David hopes to go on to become a paramedic. Paramedic training requires 1,000 hours of instruction above the EMTI. Admission into this program is very difficult, and once admitted, the student must spend two semesters at UNM, working out of the UNM hospital.

David is now the assistant coordinator for the ERT. He has completed 200 hours of HAZMAT training and will become a HAZMAT specialist when he completes the remaining 80 hours in April.

He is a CPR instructor at TA-55, but he would also like to become certified as an EMT instructor. He could then teach First Responder and EMT basic courses at TA-55 and the Espanola Hospital.

What's It Like Being an EMT?

David has been shot at, punched, bitten, spit at, and vomited on. He has taken verbal abuse and dealt with a lot of people who are drunk or high on drugs. Since the pay is minimal, some people have asked him why he does it. David says, "When I bring some old lady in out of the boonies, and she's so glad there's someone there to care about her, it makes it worth it. And when I know I've saved a life, it's definitely worth it."

He finds dealing with suicides particularly hard because the EMTs must wait with the body, sometimes alone, until authorities arrive. Children's deaths are also hard for him. His worst weekend was one when he was feeling low for personal reasons and there were three suicides and three cases of infant death syndrome. He thought about quitting, but he decided if he could make it through that, he could make it through anything.

Sometimes everyone is hysterical when the ambulance arrives. EMTs are taught that calm starts a chain reaction. David's soft voice and calm manner have a natural quieting effect.

Does he ever wonder if he handled an emergency right? "Of course, all the time, every time — it is important to self-evaluate. This is how you improve. If you think you know it all and can't get any better, you're in real trouble. We also learn from each other. If I see other technicians do something a different way, I'm curious. If they can do it better, I want to learn how." This is an attitude that also works for him as a member of the ERT and as a technician in PF-4.

One other skill David uses in both places is discretion. His reasons for discretion at TA-55 may have to do with national security — on his other job it has to do with confidentiality. Don't even bother to ask him about that wreck last weekend, even if you saw him there in person or on TV. The patient's privacy is respected, and, in addition, David, his radio communications, and his reports can all be subpoenaed for criminal or civil proceedings.

David has found a way to be of special value at work and in his community. One thing David is never called is a "couch potato."

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Incident Investigations and Lessons Learned

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Recent Incidents

Investigations are still in progress on two recent incidents that were reported in local newspapers. One incident involved a liquid nitrogen dewar that ruptured violently, and the other was a contamination incident. As more is known about these incidents, the lessons learned will appear here.

Incident Investigations

The focus of any incident investigation is on (a) determining what happened, (b) learning from what happened, and (c) putting something in place to prevent the problem from happening again. Finding fault is not part of the process.

In performing incident investigation, the team investigating the incident needs your help to (a) find out what happened and (b) fix the problem. Please cooperate with incident investigation teams and help make TA-55 safer for us all.

Rapid Response Team — A Creative Approach to Incident Investigations

Del Harbur created a Rapid Response Team to assist him in responding to incidents at TA-55. The team's purpose will be to assure that we respond properly and then learn from the incidents.

Each incident is unique, but in general the team will

- ensure that the situation has been stabilized,
- generate and analyze data,
- characterize the incident,
- report details (especially 5000.3A reports),
- justify continuing or curtailing the operations,
- decide if similar operations should be curtailed,
- assign analysis team if complex incidents warrants,
- ensure that final actions are taken to resolve incident, and
- apply lessons learned.

Representatives come from

- division management,
- facility management,
- the safety office,
- HS-1,
- the group management of affected group,
- the training office,
- the on-call facility manager for 5000.3A reporting,
- the TA-55 5000.3a reporting office,
- ES&H compliance office, and
- DOE facility representatives.

The intent is to have a team with a wide background to assist in critiquing, analyzing, and questioning so that we can rapidly understand, resolve, and learn from these incidents to improve our safety programs at TA-55.

New Radiation Training Required for TA-55 Workers in '93

by Laura Jarvinen, NMT-10

TA-55 workers must complete new requirements for radiation safety training in 1993. The new requirements are part of the gradual implementation of the new Laboratory Radiological Control (RADCON) manual. This new manual standardizes the radiological control activities here in Los Alamos and brings them into agreement with the DOE RADCON Manual. Some of the provisions challenge the Laboratory to go beyond minimum regulatory requirements.

Training will be offered at four levels: General Employee Radiation Safety, Radiation Control Technician, Radiation Worker I, and Radiation Worker II.

TA-55 workers who work in PF-4 or supervise anyone who works in PF-4 must have Radiation Worker II training. Other radiation workers who enter PF-4 only to observe require Radiation Worker I training. Our HS-1 personnel need Radiation Control Technician training.

Both the Radiation Worker I and the Radiation Worker II training have three requirements:

- **Taking 8 hours of HS-3 classroom training and/or passing a written test** — You must be recertified every two years, but if you can pass the test, you do not have to take the training.
- **Passing a practical exercise in the laboratory mock-up room of the TA-55 Training Center** — If you are a radiation worker at another facility as well as at TA-55, you may have to participate in a practical exercise at that facility also. You must be recertified every two years.
- **Completing a new facility-specific radiation training course** — You will receive this training at the TA-55 Training Center when you complete your annual facility training. You must be recertified every two years. This new training will replace the basic radiation safety test that was given on the computer.

One advantage of the standardized training is that if you successfully complete radiation training at Los Alamos, it will be recognized and accepted at other DOE sites. When you complete your training at HS-3, you will receive a wallet-sized certificate that you may carry with you when you travel to other sites.

LALP-93-2
Volume 2, March 1993
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W-7405-ENG-36.