

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 21, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending March 21, 1997.

1. DNFSB Activity Summary: Jim McConnell was on site all week. Harry Waugh was in Albuquerque all week for a W78 archiving conference.

2. New Issues:

a. Pit Transfers from Rocky Flats to Pantex: Pantex received the first shipment of pits from the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site this week. The start of shipments was dependent on finalizing the plans and requirements for shipping, receiving, and storage. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory has expressed a strong desire that all LLNL pits should pass a helium leak check prior to shipment; however, current plans are to perform only a radiological swipe of the pit surface prior to packaging for shipment. Los Alamos National Laboratory also would like its pits to be leak checked prior to shipment. LANL has indicated a willingness to accept a visual inspection, vacuum monitoring of systems with that capability, or weight check as applicable along with the radiological swipe. Pantex will repeat the checks described above before transferring the pits to AL-R8 containers for storage in Zone 4. This week's shipment, and up to a couple more, will be performed under the old DOT certification for the Mod-FL shipping container. After that, Pantex will have to modify its container recertification process (including more rigorous leak test requirements) prior to resuming shipments under the new Mod-FL DOT certification.

b. Pit Cleaning: Waste management personnel from Mason and Hanger (MHC) demonstrated a proposed new method for remote pit cleaning this week. The process, which uses a non-regulated cleaning solution called Borothane, will be conducted in the vessels previously used for DMSO dissolution of HE on the W48 program. This equipment has the advantage of already having been approved for use in the bays at Pantex. The process appears to meet the cleanliness requirements for pit packaging in the AT-400A although it may require one short manual cleaning using water or isopropyl alcohol to remove any residue from the cleaning solution off the pit. If this process is ultimately found to be acceptable it could significantly reduce the personnel exposure that would otherwise be required to clean the pits by hand.

3. Issue Follow-Up:

a. Radiography Restart: Efforts to restart radiography operations appear to be on hold until new information is available from the design agencies. In the meantime, MHC is developing a cost and schedule proposal to add engineered safety features to the current control scheme. These controls, which will be at least high-grade off-the-shelf components (but not necessarily nuclear grade), will shut down the linac based on time. MHC is also working to develop an engineered control that will limit the minimum distance between the linac head and the nuclear explosive package (and thus the dose rate at the surface of the nuclear explosive package).

4. Additional Information:

a. Personnel Changes at AAO: Gerry Johnson, the Amarillo Area Office Manager, has announced that he is leaving Pantex to take the job as Operations Office Manager at DOE-Nevada. There is no indication at this time when Johnson will actually transfer. In related news, DOE has completed the selection process to fill the vacant assistant manager position for weapons programs. An announcement of the selection should be made next week.

b. Pantex Security Guard Strike: The local security guards union went out on strike Monday morning when its contract with Mason and Hanger expired. A temporary guard force is now in place comprised of non-union guards from across the DOE complex. The command and control elements of the Pantex guard force (i.e., the managers and supervisors) are not unionized so those aspects of the security force are not effected by the strike.

5. Future Activities:

- a. February 4-March ? - W69 Dismantlement NESS
- b. March 25 - W79 MC3395 Removal begins
- c. March 25-27 - W56 Milestone 2 Meeting
- d. April 4 - W79 DMSO Check Out RA starts
- e. April 9 - Quarterly Production Meeting
- f. May 15 - M&H AT-400A Corporate ORR begins (estimate)
- g. June ? - DOE AT-400A ORR (following conclusion of M&H ORR)

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