

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 25, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR:G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives

SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for the Week Ending April 25, 1997.

1. DNFSB Activity Summary:

Both Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh were on site all week. The Site Representatives devoted the majority of their time this week to orienting Tim Dwyer in preparation for his becoming the next Pantex Site Representative. The Site Representatives introduced Mr. Dwyer to the Pantex Plant Citizens' Advisory Board and senior managers from the DOE Area Office and Mason and Hanger. He also began site familiarization.

2. New Issues:

a. Material Handling, Transportation, and Storage:Material handling, transportation, and storage have never been a Mason and Hanger strong suit. This was demonstrated again this week. One occurrence involved removing radiological control area postings and placing a bay in repair mode prior to actually removing the radioactive waste. Another, perhaps more serious occurrence, involved moving two W79 weapons into the Building 12- 64 sandbagged bay. A procedural violation resulted when the Nuclear Material Control Center was closed down prior to completing the movement transaction. In addition, the brakes on the transportation carts were rusted and were not completely locked. As a result, the transportation carts rolled slightly so that the weapons were not totally within the sandbagged compartment. It appears that this may have resulted in a violation of the technical publication, TP 20-7 because coverage within the sandbag compartment is required to ensure an explosion in one compartment does not propagate to another compartment. Because of this concern, which has not yet been resolved, the occurrence report was classified as "unusual".

3. Issue Follow-Up:

a. Linac Bay Resumption:MHC resumed weapon x-ray operations in the linac bays last weekend. Despite some minor operational problems, most weapon programs are back on track with respect to x-ray operations. Many programs are still impacted by the shutdown of the dynamic balancer. However, the requirement for dynamic balancing of one of the key programs, the W87 Joint Test Assembly (JTA), will probably be resolved expeditiously (before the operation is resumed in general) because the JTA is a Nuclear Explosive-Like Assembly but is not an actual nuclear explosive and the consequences of even an unlikely event are significantly reduced.

b. B61-5 Dismantlement:Last week, the Pantex Site Representatives reported the details of a failed electrical test on a B61 Mod 5. The test is required by a Nuclear Explosive Safety Rule. A repeat incident occurred this week and the dismantlement line is again shut down. Mason and Hanger promptly reported this test failure using the occurrence reporting system. The evaluation of last week's incident indicated that the test failures are the result of a problem with the electrical tester cable. The Design Agency (SNL/NM) has authorized a temporary fix for the cable. A new cable will be ready to be tried out next week.

c. W69 Nuclear Explosive Safety Study:DOE and MHC are starting to develop plans to address the issues raised in the W69 NESS report. The Site Representatives discussed some of the specifics of the NESS report in last week's Weekly Letter. It appears that a number of the findings and recommendations will have generic implications beyond just the W69. In addition, the W69 Hazard Analysis Report (HAR) review, which is being conducted separately by a different group, will also generate a large number of generic and specific issues. It

appears that MHC will have to perform another analysis (or at least a detailed review of previous analyses) to definitively explain what the hazards of the W69 dismantlement are, what controls are in place to address those hazards, and where those controls are actually implemented. In the Site Representatives' opinion, resolution of these issues will take quite a while and, therefore, the start of W69 dismantlement is not imminent.

4. Future Activities:

- a. May 2 - W79 DMSO Check Out RA starts
- b. May 27 - M&H AT-400A Corporate ORR begins (estimate)
- c. May 27-June 9 - W87 WPRR
- d. May 30-June 5 - W79 Type 6B DMSO WPRR
- e. June ? - DOE AT-400A ORR (following conclusion of M&H ORR)
- f. June 10 - B61-7 NESS Revalidation begins
- g. June 23 - W79 Type 6B DMSO Readiness Assesment begins

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Board Members