

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 1, 2000

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives  
**SUBJECT:** Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending December 1, 2000

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** H. Waugh and W. White were on site all week. C. Martin and L. McGrew were on site to observe the revalidation of the W88 Nuclear Explosive Safety Study (NESS). T. Huntley and R. West were on site to observe the DOE readiness assessment for the W88.

**W88 Independent Review Activities:** The revalidation of the W88 NESS continued this week. All demonstrations of cell operations were completed. The use of remote video connections continued, allowing additional observers to watch the demonstrations and reducing overcrowding in the cells during the demonstrations. Next week, the NESS group will continue with deliberations on issues raised during the study.

The DOE readiness assessment of W88 completed its field work this week, observing cell operations in conjunction with the NESS group. The team appeared competent and initial indications are that they have developed an accurate set of issues to be corrected. Eleven pre-start findings and four post-start findings were tentatively identified. These findings are in the areas of conduct of operations, explosive safety, authorization basis, and training. Pre-start findings related to conduct of operations involve deficiencies in procedures, failure to accomplish administrative controls related to lightning protection and combustible loading, and incidences of informality of operations. Pre-start findings related to the authorization basis involved implementation of administrative controls into operating procedures. The findings in these areas are similar to those identified in the contractor readiness assessment, demonstrating problems with the contractor taking effective actions for noted problems.<sup>[II.A]</sup>

**Contract Transition:** DOE, MHC, and BWXT held kick-off meetings this week to begin the transition from MHC to BWXT as the Pantex contractor. Over the next two months, the transition will be facilitated by daily plan-of-the-day meetings, weekly transition status meetings, periodic town hall meetings open to the public, and a readiness review meeting before the final transition occurs. A comprehensive, integrated transition plan is not yet complete. Although not formally approved, the expected transition date is February 1, 2001.<sup>[II.A]</sup>

**Lightning Protection:** The DOE Amarillo Area Office Manager and his authorization basis staff manager briefed Pantex production technicians this week on the rationale for existing lightning protection controls and on the possibility of changes in these controls for the W87 and other programs. Attending the briefings were senior managers from both MHC and BWXT. The briefings were held in response to concerns voiced by production technicians over the past few months. The technicians appeared concerned that the complex, constantly changing administrative controls in place to protect against lightning and other hazards were confusing, difficult to implement while performing work, and possibly counterproductive from a safety perspective. Similar briefings will be held in the future to discuss administrative controls in place to protect against other hazards (such as fire). Although the briefings did not appear to allay the technicians' concerns entirely, the effort by DOE and contractor management to explain and defend the rationale for safety controls was a positive step forward.<sup>[II.A]</sup>

**W76 Disassembly and Inspection:** The first W76 unit to go through the new SS-21 disassembly and inspection process was completed this week. This marks the first non-dismantlement unit to complete an assembly or disassembly procedure under a seamless safety process at Pantex. Disassembly and inspection operations began in September.<sup>[II.A]</sup>