

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 27, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director

FROM: H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives

SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending July 27, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was on site Monday and Tuesday and on leave for the remainder of the week. Board members J. Conway, A. J. Eggenberger, J. DiNunno, and J. Mansfield were on site Tuesday. Board Staff members K. Fortenberry, J. McConnell, T. Dwyer, and T. Huntley were on site Monday and Tuesday. A. Matteucci and R. West (Outside Expert) were on site all week to observe the continuing BWXT W78 readiness assessment and the DOE W78 Nuclear Explosive Safety Study scheduling and planning meeting.

DNFSB Board Visit: Board members and staff were briefed on the status of ongoing SS-21 projects and observed weapons operations at the Pantex Plant. Quarterly status and update briefings were also provided to the Board on Recommendations 98-2, 99-1 and 2000-2.

W78 Contractor Readiness Assessment: BWXT suspended the W78 step 1 contractor readiness assessment (CRA) for both the Disassembly & Inspection (D&I) and Repair processes on Wednesday of this week. The decision to suspend the CRA was made with all D&I operations complete with the exception of one remaining task in the cell. Review of all functional areas had been completed except for operations, nuclear explosive safety, maintenance, and authorization basis.

The decision to suspend the CRA was made because of the significant number of problems raised in conduct of operations, procedures, implementation of controls, and nuclear explosive safety (see Pantex Activity Report for week of July 20, 2001). Additionally, there were questions concerning the potential for significant delays in initiating corrective actions for D&I operations if the readiness assessment of the Repair operations were conducted. Although the CRA of the Repair operations were never initiated, there is a likelihood of additional delays in beginning these operations since Repair operations were not reviewed by the technical assist.

Although plans of action to correct deficiencies are still being defined, the initial proposal is to remove the qualification status of the production technicians, revise procedures, perform procedure validation (trainer D&I and repair operations), revise procedures again as necessary, and requalify operators with another series of trainer D&I and repair operations. BWXT is still developing a plan for ensuring safety controls are implemented. The method to be used for validating readiness to resume the CRA is being studied and hopefully will be finalized by next week. Several areas that were addressed prior to suspension of the CRA, such as waste management and environmental protection, will again be addressed in the CRA although there were no problems identified in these areas. [II.A]

Authorization Basis Documentation for Nuclear Start-up of 12-104A Paint Bay: DOE/AAO's assessment of the BWXT authorization basis (AB) documentation for 12-104A start-up indicates several deficiencies. The AB for the new Paint Bay relies on administrative controls when design controls are currently available, and it lacks sufficient rationale in correlating factors of safety and failure probability. DOE/AAO will provide results of their assessment to BWXT for correction of deficiencies. [II.A]