

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 2, 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 November 2, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was at the Albuquerque Operations Office on Friday for a meeting of the Standing Management Team and was on site for the remainder of the week.

Recommendation 99-1: On Tuesday, the Board's staff and site representatives held a video conference with personnel from BWXT Pantex, NNSA/AAO, NNSA/AL, and NNSA/HQ to discuss open items from the Board's Recommendation 99-1 and the DOE Implementation Plan for the recommendation. The following are some of the issues discussed:

- ? No progress has been made by NNSA in proposing a revision to commitment 5.2.1, "establish and sustain two double shift repackaging lines for an estimated repackaging rate of 200 pits per month." BWXT has been able to achieve a repackaging rate of 200 pits per month without two double shift repackaging lines, but NNSA has not formally approached the Board with a request to accept the sustained repackaging rate of 200 pits per month in lieu of the existing commitment. For the month of October, BWXT repackaged 209 pits. With the exception of September, when operations at the plant were suspended for a portion of the month, BWXT has repackaged at least 200 pits per month since April 2001.
- ? As discussed in a previous weekly report, BWXT has a backlog of about one year's worth of container surveillance. BWXT and AAO have agreed this backlog will be eliminated by the end of FY03, at which point the Pantex Plant will be on target for completing the initial five year surveillance program outlined in the container surveillance plan (commitment 5.3.1).
- ? Currently plans are to have pit cleaning capability at Pantex in FY03. A letter from NNSA/AL to NNSA/AAO requests this capability be in place by March 31, 2003. In the interim, NNSA will delay implementation of the design agency specification requiring pit cleaning for W56 pits within eight weeks of removal from the nuclear explosive package.
- ? A bay-to-bay transfer cart for pits has been approved and changes to the safety basis have been implemented to allow use of the carts. However, the carts are not currently being used due to a shortage of material handlers. In addition, an open-lid configuration of the cart is currently being evaluated for approval.

Lightning Protection Control Changes: AAO approved a BWXT authorization basis change proposal this week to allow certain operations currently prohibited during lightning warnings to be conducted during lightning warnings. These operations include task exhaust operations, hoisting, manifold operations, and transportation in certain configurations (those where the protection provided by the shipping container does not rely on any feature of the nuclear explosive configuration being transported). The proposal was made on the basis that adequate engineered controls exist for all of these operations to protect against hazards from lightning. The proposed changes followed an initial proposal to make the changes for the W87 program only. At the request of AAO, BWXT had postponed implementing any changes for the W87 program until the changes could be uniformly applied to all weapons programs. At present, however, no plan has been submitted to AAO defining how and when the control changes will be implemented. [II.A]