

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 6, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: W. White, Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending February 6, 2004

DNFSB Activity Summary: W. White was on leave Monday and on site for the remainder of the week.

Pit Anomaly: On Wednesday, LASO personnel reported to PXSO that LANL discovered an anomaly with a B57 pit during surveillance work with that pit at LANL. BWXT identified a potential inadequacy in its safety analysis pending an evaluation by LANL regarding any potential safety issues presented by the anomaly with respect to handling, packaging, or transportation of that pit type at the Pantex Plant. As a precaution, BWXT has suspended all handling and movement of this pit type and similar pit types until the LANL evaluation is completed. The LANL evaluation should be complete by early next week.

On Thursday, PXSO sent a letter to BWXT asking BWXT to “develop a team that would evaluate potential Pantex vulnerabilities and safety issues associated with the B57 Pit Handling/Storage/Staging/Transportation.” The letter specifically asks BWXT to identify the number of affected pits, the storage and staging locations of these pits, the current configuration/containers for the pits, projected impacts to scheduled work, and the relevance of a recently closed investigation into the potential for a similar anomaly with a different pit type. [I, NA]

Paint Bay: BWXT continued its readiness verification this week for start up of the Paint Bay. This facility will replace the existing paint facility. The existing facility is no longer used for painting nuclear explosives. The new facility will be authorized to paint nuclear explosives, starting with the B83 program. The contractor operational readiness review is scheduled for March 2004, and the NNSA operational readiness review is scheduled for April 2004.

Early this week, PXSO approved changes to the *Paint Bay Safety Analysis Report* and the *Technical Safety Requirements for Pantex Facilities* to incorporate compensatory measures related to certain scenarios involving the transportation of explosives. The *Paint Bay Safety Analysis Report* relies on site-wide safety basis documents for specific controls to prevent an explosion in the ramps outside nuclear facilities. The controls (e.g., prohibiting the movement of explosives during lightning or severe weather warnings) are already in place procedurally, but have not been implemented as technical safety requirements. This is because the site safety basis documents in which these controls are identified were developed to bring the Pantex Plant into compliance with 10 CFR 830 and are not yet implemented. Rather than implement these administrative restrictions as technical safety requirements during the Paint Bay start up effort, however, BWXT chose to identify a new control that would prohibit the movement of explosives in the ramps outside the Paint Bay to mitigate the effects of any external explosion on Paint Bay operations. This would not address the potential impacts of such an explosion on facilities other than the Paint Bay.

In approving these changes, PXSO noted that “this change proposal would not have been necessary had the controls developed in the Bays and Cells SAR been implemented in a timely manner.” [I, W3, W4].