

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 3, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: T. Hunt, Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending September 3, 2004

W56 Cell Operations Restart. The contractor readiness assessment (CRA) for resumption of W56 cell operations was concluded this week. The limited scope CRA addressed the new tooling, minor changes to the safety basis, and closure of judgments of need. The only prestart finding – which was pre-identified – concerns the cause determination of the initial cracking and awaits design agency concurrence. Although the BWXT General Manager is the restart authorization authority, PXSO plans to validate closure of applicable judgments of need and inform the Board's staff of the results prior to restart of cell operations. [I, NA]

Subcontractor Operations. BWXT management met with its subcontractors this week to communicate its safety expectations following several recent incidents (most were related to electrical or personal protective equipment). BWXT has developed new guidelines for oversight and contractor compliance. Key changes include more frequent safety oversight by BWXT, new lockout/tagout and general subcontractor worker training, and awarding of future subcontracts based in part on their safety record. The phased restart of subcontractor activities based on hazard and risk will begin next week. [I, M9, W4, P3, P1]

Legacy Material Disposition. The Pantex Plant stores a large inventory of neutron generators that are excess to national security requirements. BWXT recently initiated a campaign to reduce that number by more than half this fiscal year. The generators contain nuclear and radiological materials in addition to explosive and chemical hazards. This is the first time that neutron generators have been disassembled, sanitized, and dispositioned on a large scale at the Pantex Plant and the project has been successful to date. The initial phase of the project will be completed this month but additional funding needs to be found in fiscal year 2005 to complete the remaining half of the generator disposition project. [I, NA]

Technical Safety Requirement Violation. On Wednesday, a mobile crane weighing more than 80,000 pounds operated on site roadways within the limited area without complying with the compensatory requirements of PX-JCO-04-06, *"Justification for Continued Operations for On-site Transportation of Loads Exceeding 80,000 Pounds."* The compensatory measures include contacting the Operations Center prior to traveling on certain site roadways to ensure concurrent movement of nuclear material or explosives are not taking place. All indications are that the JCO controls were written assuming that they would only apply to subcontractor vehicles, as no BWXT vehicles were credited with exceeding 80,000 lbs during development of the authorization basis. After a previous occurrence with an overweight vehicle on-site (see July 23, 2004 site rep weekly), a further evaluation by BWXT concluded that the heaviest Pantex Plant vehicles weighed less than 80,000 lbs. The crane in this instance had a specification weight of 73,000 lbs dry, 76,600 lbs wet; but subsequent discussions with the manufacturer show that when fully accoutered it could weigh more than 80,000 lbs. The plant heavy equipment operators were not aware of the JCO requirements and had used this crane in the material access area and limited area on previous occasions. BWXT has initiated an evaluation of all plant vehicles that may approach 80,000 lbs. [I, P1, W3, E2]