

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

**MEMO TO:** J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives  
**DATE:** 7 April 2006  
**SUBJECT:** Pantex Plant Weekly Report

**Pantex Weapon Throughput:** The number of stockpile deliverables completed in March was 104 units. This was the most productive month since August 2002.

**Grass Fires:** On Thursday, for the second time in the past week, the Pantex Plant Fire Department responded to grass fires north of Amarillo, which is west of the plant site. Gusting winds in excess of 60 miles an hour drove the fires in the general direction of the site. As a precaution, all on-site operations were suspended and weapon operations were put in safe and stable configurations. The fires were contained late Thursday evening.

**Nuclear Explosive Safety Studies (NESSs):** The W87 NESS group initially generated six pre-start findings from its recently completed study. The PXSO Site Manager is challenging the technical basis for four of them. The PXSO representative of the W87 NESS group has been directed to provide additional details on mixed loads, fire extinguishers, and mass properties equipment. The fourth finding relates to the reading of radiographs and is being further investigated by other site office personnel. NA-12 will consider PXSO's position paper on these findings during the W87 NESS report approval process.

The aforementioned PXSO NESS group member is also developing a memo for NNSA-HQ approval that would exempt a PXSO member from participating in future NESSs, as currently required by DOE-STD 3015-2004, on a case-by-case basis. The memo is also expected to address allowance of PXSO representatives to chair nuclear explosive safety change evaluations.

In a letter dated 3 April, NA-12 approved extensions for the W88 Bay and Satellite Operations NESSs. The subject NESSs were scheduled to expire this May. NA-12 extended the expirations to 28 February 2008. The bases for the extensions include the use of SS-21 tooling and an approved safety basis.

**Pantex Throughput Improvement Initiatives:** This week, NNSA management visited Pantex, along with representatives from the national laboratories, to discuss the status of several initiatives NNSA is pursuing to improve weapon throughput at Pantex including the following: multi-unit operations; revising DOE Standard 3016, *Hazard Analysis Reports for Nuclear Explosive Operations*, and the Development and Production Manual; obtaining exemptions to the requirements of 10 CFR 830, *Nuclear Safety Management*; and extending specific weapon program NESS expirations.

**W76 Anomalous Units:** Three units recently processed were found to have a similar problem that prevented completion of the disassembly. After determining that the tooling was not contributing to the failure, research on production dates indicated that – based on the finding that the three units were built within one month of each other – the problem may have to do with changes in the manufacturing process implemented during that time. The units have been moved to a staging bay while an authorization basis change is being generated to allow an increased force to be applied to the component.