

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 23 June 2006
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

DNFSB Staff Activity: C. Martin was on-site this week to observe the W84 permissive action link (PAL) limited scope nuclear explosive safety study (NESS) and review other NESS reports.

PXSO Reorganization: The Site Office Manager recently announced plans to reorganize PXSO. The reorganization included the following actions:

- reassigning the two members of the PXSO NES group,
- increasing the number of facility representatives to meet the staffing analysis goal of ten,
- dissolving the operations organization and reassigning its 15 members,
- creating an Assistant Manager for Facility Operations position to manage the facility representative staff, and
- realigning resources to increase oversight of contractor safety management programs.

High Explosive (HE) Operations: As a result of the recent HE accident at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant (IAAP), BWXT HE Manufacturing Division performed a self-assessment of its operations that are similar to those suspected of being the cause of the IAAP blast. The self-assessment focused on handling operations and the need to prevent drops and minimize possible drop heights, as well as pad floors and hard objects. BWXT representatives had observed operations at IAAP in February and noted several differences in how work was conducted there versus at Pantex. Potential weaknesses at IAAP included inadequate hoist equipment, absence of safety oversight, reactivation of 30 year old equipment, poor processing standards, non-conservative explosives transportation requirements, and lack of a structural analysis of the charge before movement. Neither the type (LX-14) nor the size (190 lbs) of the charge in the IAAP explosion currently exists at Pantex.

W56 Dismantlement: BWXT successfully completed separation and removal of a component that had been excessively eroded during a dissolution operation. Lessons learned from a similar occurrence in January 2004 appear to have been effectively implemented. The component was confined with tape prior to application of additional force. The recovery procedure, technician training, management and engineering oversight, and work were all adequately executed.

W88 Restart Project: Last week, the NNSA Office of Nuclear Weapons Stockpile directed PXSO, the Sandia Site Office, and Los Alamos Site Office to ensure that the contractor organizations amend the scope of the W88 cell operations restart project. Until receiving this additional direction, the scope of the W88 restart project consisted of obtaining a 10CFR830 exemption and reinstating the expired NESS in order to utilize a non-SS-21 process to disassemble three units. The letter from NNSA directs the following changes to the project scope: additional processing activities are included, a limited scope NESS shall be performed prior to operations authorization, and the disassembly activity will not be limited to three units.

W84 PAL NESS: This week, representatives of Los Alamos National Laboratory, Sandia National Laboratories, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, NNSA headquarters, BWXT, and PXSO met to evaluate proposed limited scope W84 operations. The NESS identified one pre-start finding regarding the tester configuration. The DNFSB staff is concerned that the input document did not contain all relevant information needed; however, the DNFSB staff ensured that the missing information was provided during the study.