

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 22 June 2007
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

Recommendation 2005-1, *Nuclear Material Packaging*: BWXT evaluated actions necessary to implement draft DOE M 441.1-1, *Nuclear Material Packaging Manual*, and has determined that the nuclear material currently housed at Pantex is outside the scope of the manual. The pits, canned subassemblies, radioisotopic thermoelectric generators, reservoirs, and sealed sources are all stored within engineered containment barriers.

Tri-Lab Project Office Support: Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has increased its Tri-Lab office technical staffing at Pantex from five to seven by assigning two additional staff members. Both are from the LANL Weapon Systems Division and are to support the planned operational increases associated with the W76, W88, and B53 startups. One individual will provide on-site support for weapon response issues and the other will support the W88 SS-21 process startup. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) has no current plans to permanently supplement its one person Tri-Lab staff. LLNL management believes that its Tri-Lab office is adequately supported from headquarters.

NNSA Conduct of Operations (CoO) Effectiveness Review: Last month, NNSA conducted a follow-up review (the prior review was completed in May 2006) to assess whether BWXT has been successful in continuing to improve CoO. This week, NNSA issued its final report from the follow-up review. The report concludes that adherence to CoO principles and requirements, as demonstrated by first line supervisors and production technicians, was good. However, the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) remains a work in progress and does not represent a finished, implemented program. Specific comments from the report include the following: (a) the number of nuclear safety officers (NSOs) in the Manufacturing Division has decreased from seven in 2006 to three currently; (b) during the last three years, BWXT has independently assessed the implementation of only one of the eighteen chapters of DOE Order 5480.19, *Conduct of Operations Requirements*; and (c) BWXT has yet to finalize CoO performance criteria and develop metrics to monitor the success in achieving those criteria.

Paint Bay: PXSO authorized startup of Paint Bay operations in November 2005. Since that time, only joint test assemblies (JTAs) and other non-nuclear equipment have been painted in the Paint Bay. A 6 October 2000 DNFSB Pantex Plant Weekly Report stated, "in light of the lack of operational need to paint nuclear explosives now or in the immediate future, it is not clear what DOE or [the contractor] expects to gain from expending authorization basis resources to accomplish start-up of [the Paint Bay] ... it is unclear why [the contractor] and DOE do not start up [the Paint Bay] as a non-nuclear facility..." Currently, BWXT is interested in downgrading the Paint Bay to a non-nuclear explosive facility since there does not appear to be any near-term mission to paint nuclear explosives. BWXT is still operating an older painting facility and is using the older facility for hazardous, non-nuclear painting operations because the Paint Bay does not have the capabilities—including a hoist—to perform all of the necessary weapons related painting operations.

W88 Cell Rebuild Readiness Assessment (RA): NNSA completed its RA this week and identified two post-start findings. Operations on the first of a limited number of rebuilds could begin in mid-July.

B53: The shipping and staging campaign was successfully completed this week.