

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 12, 2015

MEMO TO: Steven Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: Christopher Berg, Acting Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Report for Week Ending June 12, 2015

Detonator Cable Assembly (DCA) Removal Issue: On February 11, 2015, Production Technicians (PT) paused a nuclear explosive disassembly operation, and placed the unit in a safe and stable configuration, after identifying an issue with DCA removal (see report for 2/13/15). At that time, an approved procedure existed to address this issue on a different weapon program; however, the procedure was not authorized for the weapon program of concern. When processing the identified unit, Consolidated Nuclear Security, LLC (CNS), plans to utilize a disassembly process similar to the one authorized for the other weapon program. For this planned unit disassembly operation, the Design Agency submitted an Information Engineering Release to CNS on May 27, 2015, authorizing the use of weapon responses previously developed for the other weapon program's authorized procedure.

On June 10, 2015, CNS submitted a Justification for Continued Operations (JCO) to the NNSA Production Office (NPO) for the resumption of disassembly operations on the identified unit. Additionally, this week, CNS conducted PT training on the Nuclear Explosive Engineering Procedure for unit disassembly. A Nuclear Explosive Safety Change Evaluation (NCE) is tentatively scheduled for June 15, 2015, to evaluate the unit disassembly procedure. At the time of this report, NPO had not approved the submitted JCO.

Code Blue Update: Last week, NPO issued two Safety Evaluation Reports approving JCOs submitted by CNS for the resumption of operations on the two affected weapon programs. Subsequently, NNSA conducted and approved two separate NCEs on proposed changes to nuclear explosive operations for the weapon programs (see report for 6/5/15).

This week, CNS completed training and Implementation Verification Reviews on the proposed changes, and the two weapon programs were released to resume nuclear explosive operations. However, prior to operation resumption for one weapon program, CNS discovered an issue in the appendix of the Nuclear Explosive Operating Procedure (NEOP). CNS submitted the NEOP into its procedural change process. Subsequently, the revised procedure was published and nuclear explosive operations on this weapon program have resumed.

Facility Lighting: While observing a nuclear explosive disassembly operation in one facility, the Acting Site Representative and NPO Facility Representative noted that the overhead lighting system briefly lost power and then reenergized. The PTs stated that this brief loss of lighting was not an uncommon occurrence. The Acting Site Representative notes that no immediate safety issue resulted from this given incident; however, even a brief loss of lighting may pose a safety concern if occurring during a critical operational step. The Acting Site Representative informed the CNS Facility Manager of this concern.

Loss of Power Event: On June 11, 2015, the Pantex Plant experienced a site-wide loss of power for approximately eight hours. The Acting Site Representative did not note any impact to facility safety systems or the communication of facility alarms to the Pantex Operations Center.