DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 17, 2026

Pantex Plant Resident Inspectors Activity Report for Week Ending July 17, 2026

Safety Basis Assessment: Recently, PFO completed an assessment of the safety basis program at Pantex. PFO established objectives for this assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the safety basis program and determine if PXD has provided sufficient training to their safety analysis engineers to perform their job functions. As a result of this assessment, PFO found that PXD "has not established or implemented a formal documented process for evaluating the performance of its Safety Basis Program." Additionally, PFO relayed observations, including an identified lack of defined responsibilities for the PXD technical staff and challenges stemming from a lack of clear program ownership. PFO noted other challenges such as inconsistent communication channels, as well as an underutilized central repository and insufficient traceability for incorporation of lessons learned into safety basis document revisions.

In response to these assessment results, PXD conducted a causal analysis in which personnel determined the overall cause of these issues was a lack of well-defined management policy guidance. Additionally, PXD participants developed actions to define the roles and responsibilities for a safety basis program owner and technical reviewers, as well as update implementing procedures to incorporate lessons learned into established processes. In the causal analysis meeting, PXD personnel stated that many safety basis program actions have been performed informally for years, including audit practices to verify the health of the Pantex safety basis; as a result, PXD views this as an opportunity for the organization to formalize its program and these processes.

Pause and Stop Work Practices: In February 2026, based on observations during walkdowns as part of a shadow assessment, PFO issued a finding to PXD regarding its failure to promptly follow stop work procedures. According to PFO representatives, "[PXD] safety professionals demonstrated reluctance to promptly initiate work stoppages per PXD policy…." The policy in reference authorizes all personnel to pause or stop work if they encounter safety, security, or quality concerns. PFO noted that, although the policy does not specify a time requirement, delays in pausing or stopping work may increase risk. This week, during a causal analysis for this finding, PXD identified that initiating the stop or pause work action is a plant-wide expectation and that reluctance or misunderstanding of the policy could exist in any organization. Furthermore, PXD noted that "the impact of deciding to stop/pause work on production is a common concern among personnel who initiated this action in the past." PXD identified two causes for this issue—ambiguous instructions or requirements, and inadequate training content. For the first cause, PXD found the relevant manual currently has multiple steps that need to be clarified and acronyms that should be spelled out. For the second cause, PXD identified that content of the training courses does not currently match the information in the manual. This week, PXD issued a site-wide communication titled "Recommitting to Stop/Pause Work Authority," which highlights that safety controls are non-negotiable and that every worker has the authority—and obligation—to stop or pause work for any unexpected event or safety concern occurrences.