

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 16 June 2006
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

W87 SS-21: On Monday, the W87 became the first insensitive high explosive weapon program to be fully authorized for SS-21 disassembly and inspection processes. Single unit operations began this week and PXSO has requested a briefing from BWXT prior to commencing multi-unit operations outlining how the transition will be effected.

W80 Program Status: PXSO recently directed BWXT to develop a set of options to permit the restart of W80 operations using a planning assumption of completing seven units in FY07. W80 operations were suspended in September 2005. PXSO requested that BWXT include all reasonable options. BWXT is expected to submit the options to PXSO next week.

Multi-Unit Operations (MUO): BWXT issued a standing order this week that provides guidance for multi-unit processing of B61 and W87 units. MUO will be initiated in three stages. Stage 1 is the conventional single unit processing with no additional work control measures. Stage 2 consists of two units and one work crew in a facility. This reassignment processing will be implemented after operational experience is gained on the new B61 and W87 procedures. During normal operations, shifting work from one unit to another will be authorized by production management at a procedure stop point. Stage 3 is defined as simultaneous processing of two units by two work crews in a facility. Stage 3 will be entered after operational proficiency is gained in Stage 2. Additional expectations for Stage 3 implementation include Nuclear Safety Officer observation of work for two weeks and pre-job briefs in the operating area.

Nuclear Explosive Safety (NES): DOE O 452.2B, *Safety of Nuclear Explosive Operations*, states that NES evaluations must meet the requirements of DOE-STD-3015, *Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Process*. The standard requires PXSO to provide a group member to each NES review at Pantex. PXSO currently has two staff members committed to oversight of NES activities, including the aforementioned participation on NES reviews. This week, PXSO management indicated that it plans to reassign its two certified NES members; one individual will move to Systems Engineering and the other will report to the NES Division Manager at the Albuquerque Service Center. The proposed staffing changes would significantly reduce PXSO's capabilities to directly oversee future Pantex NES activities. In an exemption request letter to NA-10, NA-12, and the Central Technical Authority, PXSO stated that, despite the proposed changes, an equivalent or improved level of safety will be maintained. In particular, PXSO management believes that, despite the loss of two NES employees, PXSO personnel will be able to devote more time to oversight of NEOs.

Pit Storage: At the periodic Pit Management Meeting held this week, representatives from the physics laboratories and Pantex discussed pit storage, surveillance and thermal monitoring. Significant discussion centered around the length of time pits can be stored in non-sealed insert (SI) containers ("black cans"). The laboratories are leaning toward a limit of two years, which would compel BWXT to repackage some life extension program (LEP) pits that currently exceed that duration. An option that could extend the black can limit is to replace the celotex filler with a foam material, reducing the likelihood of pit corrosion. Temporarily repackaging LEP pits into SI containers could cause additional handling and associated safety concerns during requalification processing. Lab representatives indicated resolving this issue is a priority.