

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 4, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending January 4, 2002

DNFSB Activity Summary: The DNFSB Pantex Site Office was closed on Tuesday for the New Year's Day Holiday. H. Waugh was on site for the remainder of the week. W. White was on leave Monday and Wednesday and was on site for the remainder of the week.

W88 Multi-Unit Processing: The current authorization basis for W88 operations permits disassembly and inspection operations on only one W88 unit per nuclear explosive bay or cell. On December 21, 2001, OASO partially approved a BWXT authorization basis change request to allow the processing of multiple W88 units in nuclear explosive facilities. The OASO approval is limited to operations in nuclear explosive bays. The approval memo specifically prohibits multiple unit operations in nuclear explosive cells. The approval memo also prohibits concurrent staging operations for any conventional high explosive system in a cell where assembly or disassembly operations are ongoing on another unit (the W56 and W79 systems are exempted from this prohibition).

The approval for bay operations only was based on the conclusions of a recent BWXT white paper on potential impacts of certain accident scenarios. OASO agreed to reconsider the restrictions on concurrent processing and staging operations in cells if BWXT incorporates suggested controls in the BWXT white paper and revises the hazards analysis accordingly. Given the extent of the change authorization and the potential impacts identified in the white paper, a nuclear explosive safety study will likely be required before any multiple unit operations are initiated in either bays or cells.

In addition to incorporating changes in the W88 authorization basis to allow multiple unit operations, the BWXT change request also streamlined the existing W88 authorization basis by taking advantage of recent improvements in the site-wide authorization basis. The fire accident scenarios were deleted and, instead, the Fire Protection Basis for Interim Operations and the Pantex Technical Safety Requirements were referenced. Other W88 controls were moved from the W88 Activity-Based Control Document into the Pantex Technical Safety Requirements. [II.A]

Pit Repackaging and Staging Issues: During the three weeks of plant operations in December, BWXT personnel repackaged 174 pits into AL-R8 sealed-insert containers. This brings the total number of pits repackaged during the first three months of FY02 to 593. BWXT personnel expect to recover, at a minimum, an average rate of 200 pits repackaged per month (for FY02) by the end of January.

In addition, BWXT personnel have conducted surveillance on 21 sealed-insert containers in FY02. A higher monthly rate of container surveillance operations will be required for BWXT to meet its FY02 commitment to NNSA for surveillance. The FY02 commitment includes completing the 92 surveillance operations identified in the container surveillance plan for FY02 in addition to recovering 50 percent of the surveillance backlog from FY00 and FY01.

Finally, issues regarding the need for safety-related temperature limits for storage of certain pit types remains unresolved. Input from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on the types of LANL pits that might require safety-related temperature limits and what those limits would be was due at the end of calendar year 2001, but was not completed on schedule. [II.A]