

# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 22, 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 February 22, 2002

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** The DNFSB site office was closed on Monday for the Presidents Day Holiday. H. Waugh and W. White were on site for the remainder of the week.

**NNSA Fire Protection Readiness Assessment:** On Tuesday, NNSA began its readiness assessment (RA) of the implementation of the first phase of administrative controls in the *Fire Protection Basis for Interim Operation*. One of the first planned activities was to conduct a 'no-notice' drill to evaluate technician and fire department response to a fire in a nuclear explosive facility. The drill never occurred. Facility management had initially requested that the deluge system be blocked for the facility in which the drill was to be conducted. The drill team made changes in the drill scenario to address facility management concerns that the deluge might be accidentally initiated, and facility management cancelled its request to the Fire Department to block the deluge. The cancellation request did not reach the necessary Fire Department personnel, and the deluge was blocked during the swing shift on Wednesday. However, the facility was left in an operational mode.

When the NNSA RA team arrived to observe the drill on Thursday morning, they discovered that the deluge system had been blocked and that the facility had been left in an operational mode. Concerns over whether this constituted a violation of the *Technical Safety Requirements (TSRs) for Pantex Facilities* led NNSA to cancel the drill.

BWXT and NNSA authorization basis personnel subsequently determined that the TSRs were not applicable as the facility did not contain greater than residual quantities of nuclear material or explosives. The position of both BWXT and NNSA is that facility TSRs apply only when an inventory of nuclear material (or explosives) is actually present in a facility. The determination is that the facility was not really in an operational mode since the facility did not have greater than residual quantities of nuclear material or explosives.

However, in a meeting with NNSA personnel and the DNFSB site representative, BWXT agreed to pursue three potential concerns:

- C Should a facility be left in an operational mode if actual operations would violate TSRs? Other modes defined in the TSRs (such as repair mode) are available to identify the status of facilities in which no active or staging operations involving greater than residual quantities of nuclear material are permitted.
- C How does BWXT ensure that, if nuclear material or explosives are brought into a facility with impaired safety systems (especially if the facility is in an operational or maintenance mode), appropriate actions (per the TSRs) will be taken?
- C Why was the cancellation of the request to block the deluge not effective? [II.A]

**BWXT Reorganization:** In an effort to improve conduct of operations at the Pantex Plant, BWXT announced this week that it is reorganizing the Operations Division to "reduce the layers of management, simplify job responsibilities, and improve communication." As part of the reorganization, most operations supervisors and managers will be required to bid for positions in the new organizational structure. Employees will be allowed to apply for up to three positions. Approximately 120 employees will be affected. The placement process is expected to be complete by June. [II.A]