

# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 8, 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 March 8, 2002

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** H. Waugh and W. White were on site all week.

**Pit Concerns:** Last week, BWXT identified a potential inadequacy in its safety analysis for a certain type of pit stored at Pantex. During a meeting with NNSA and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to determine the disposition path for a subset of this pit type, LANL identified that certain experiments had indicated a potential safety concern. As a precaution, BWXT issued a standing order restricting handling and transportation of the most vulnerable subset of the population. On Wednesday, BWXT wrote a letter to LANL asking for clarification on the nature and extent of the potential problem. Specifically, BWXT asked LANL to provide a technical position on the safety of operations conducted on this pit population including pit movement, repackaging, and handling. Given the uncertainty regarding the initial information received informally from LANL, NNSA and BWXT appear to have taken appropriate compensatory actions for the near term.

The generic concern that safety issues might arise over time for pits staged at Pantex led the Board to write Recommendation 99-1, which urged NNSA to accelerate the repackaging of pits into containers more suitable for near-term, safe storage. A significant percentage of pits of the type discussed above have already been repackaged, per the Board's Recommendation 99-1, into sealed-insert containers. For the pits that have been repackaged, the safety barrier provided by the sealed-insert container should provide sufficient protection until the pits are removed from the container for disposal. If the uncertainty over handling of this pit type continues, it may be prudent for BWXT to choose sealed-insert containers for surveillance that have contents other than the pit type in question. [II.A]

**NNSA Fire Protection Readiness Assessment:** NNSA concluded its readiness assessment of the implementation of the first phase of controls from the *Fire Protection Basis for Interim Operation* (FBIO). The assessment evaluated the implementation of seven administrative controls relating to transient combustible control, fire department response, fire department escort of bulk fuel trucks, etc. In general, NNSA found the implementation of the controls to be adequate. There were four findings and four observations. The findings were all 'Category B' findings, which do not have an immediate impact on the safety of operations but do require the development of an approved corrective action plan.

The four findings were as follows:

- C A condition of approval in the safety evaluation report to revise certain LCO statements to allow exceptions had not been met.
- C One observation in the contractor's readiness assessment should have been categorized as a finding.
- C Four problems were noted with flow down of controls into procedures.
- C Some training matrices had not been updated to reflect training requirements for FBIO technical safety requirements.

One of the observations from the NNSA assessment related to inaccuracies in the safety basis database, a common theme in recent readiness assessments. [II.A]