

# DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 29, 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 29, 2002

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was on leave. A. Matteucci was on site Monday through Thursday to observe ongoing operations, readiness review activities for the Separation Test Facility, and authorization basis activities. Contractor operations at the Pantex Plant were closed for Good Friday.

**Separations Test Facility Contractor Operational Readiness Review (CORR):** Although no official notification is required to be provided, BWXT informed DOE that the CORR for restart of the separations test facility was 'officially' suspended. Presently, two problems appear to be the cause of the suspension of the CORR; 1) a material problem consisting of a crimped safety cable and, 2) problems with the readiness review process (discussed in 03/22/2002 weekly report). The crimped safety cable, which apparently was discovered last week, is being assessed by a Lockheed subject matter expert. Pictures of the damaged cable were observed and, although repair does not appear difficult, two weeks have been initially estimated to correct the material problem. Subsequent quality assurance load testing would be inherent in correcting the material problem prior to resuming review activities. [II.A]

**Corrective Action Plan for Readiness-Related Activities:** An AIM (Assess, Improve and Modernize) Team on Readiness was chartered by the BWXT General Manager (July 2001) to address significant weaknesses in the process used to declare readiness. Recent occurrences at the Pantex Plant have highlighted problems with readiness activities. An October 2001 corrective action plan (03/22/2002 weekly report) addresses the readiness-related weaknesses and presents a schedule with completion of improvement initiatives by 03/28/2002. Based on problems encountered during the readiness activities to restart operations in the separation test facility, it appears that the improvement initiatives in the corrective action plan have not been addressed by BWXT and, therefore, are far from being completed. [II.A]

**Sealed-Insert Container Surveillance:** As reported last week, a sealed-insert surveillance sample failed a leak check. A review of background data on this sealed-insert revealed that it came from the first and only procurement order for 500 units from a Denver vendor (all subsequent orders have been from a California vendor). It was procured on December 15, 1999 and pit packaging occurred on December 18, 2000. The current plan of action is to try and locate the leak with a probe and then confirm the leak rate in a bell jar. This will be followed by disassembly, recording breaking torque for each cap screw, followed by inspection of the copper gasket and sealing surfaces. [II.A]

**Authorization Basis (AB) Documentation:** Discussions with DOE AB personnel revealed that two recently delivered draft AB documents have varied approaches to documenting and tracking controls. The draft Transportation SAR Module lumped numerous administrative controls under the Transportation Program while the draft Bays and Cells SAR Module, having fewer controls and relying on weapon specific controls, documents and tracks distinctive controls. Staff review of the AB Upgrade program, including these modules, is scheduled for April. DOE is cognizant of concerns regarding the elimination of administrative controls to reduce the possibility of procedural violations. [II.A]