

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 10, 2001

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives  
**SUBJECT:** Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending August 10, 2001

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

**B83 Electrical Testing:** Earlier this month, Sandia National Laboratories released revision 3 of a special instruction engineering release (SIER) that provides instructions for performing electrical testing on a B83 unit that failed two electrical tests earlier this year. The latest revision is 17 pages long and contains between 23 and 38 specific electrical circuit tests on the B83 unit. The SIER also contains several safety-related controls to be implemented during staging and testing of the unit. These design agency controls and the hazards they are intended to address do not appear to have been evaluated through the unreviewed safety question process.

According to the SIER, the tests are intended to “isolate the fault and determine if it’s safe to continue with [disassembly and inspection].” Based on prior discussions with Sandia personnel, it is not clear that any real uncertainty exists with respect to the safe state of this unit. If the possibility exists that the unit is in an unsafe condition, it is not clear why NNSA, BWXT, and the design agency have taken more than two months since the most recent failure (more than four months since the initial failure) to identify a new path forward for this unit.

If certain tests are necessary to determine whether the unit is in a safe state for continued disassembly and inspection, it is not clear that 23 or more electrical tests are really required to perform this function. The extensive nature of the requested electrical tests appears aimed at fault isolation.

In addition, some urgency now exists with respect to completing the disassembly of this unit. The required annual fire system surveillance testing for the facility in which the unit is located must be done no later than October 17, 2001. Unless the design agency allows BWXT to move the unit within the bay, the testing cannot be done. If the testing is not completed by that date, a fire watch will be required. [II.A]

**W78 Step 1 Start Up:** BWXT began its second technical assist for the W78 program this week. The technical assist is expected to be complete before August 24, 2001. Provided all pre-start conditions are addressed, the contractor readiness assessment is scheduled to resume on August 26. The new date for the Milestone 3 briefing to NNSA and the Standing Management Team is September 13. The NNSA nuclear explosive safety study and readiness assessment are scheduled to begin the week of September 17. The goal for start up of W78 operations is November 1. [II.A]

**Technical Safety Requirement Violation:** On Thursday morning, BWXT personnel opened the doors to a secure transport vehicle during lightning warnings. This violates the *Technical Safety Requirements for Pantex Facilities* (RPT-SAR-199801). Administrative control 5.6.5.4.2.19 requires nuclear explosive transport trailer doors remain closed during lightning warnings. All personnel involved were aware of the restriction requiring the doors to be closed. However, personnel were apparently not aware that Pantex was under lightning warnings. A standing order was issued requiring verification of weather conditions prior to opening trailer doors.