

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 17, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: T. Dwyer and H. Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending March 17, 2000

DNFSB Activity Summary: T. Dwyer and H. Waugh were on site all week. OE R. Lewis was on site all week to observe Pantex site-wide exercise *Dust Devil*.

Emergency Exercise Dust Devil: On Wednesday, Pantex conducted the 1st of 2 Sitewide Emergency Exercises planned for this year. Five DOE-AL observers also participated, while conducting an “assistance visit.” The scenario involved a simulated tornado strike that resulted in: destruction/damage to 5 buildings in Zones 11 and 12, low level radioactive waste being spread both on- and off-site, 4 fatalities, 15 injured personnel, loss of steam plant power, and loss of most primary RF communications systems. The exercise was well planned, and its scope thoroughly tested Pantex’s response capability. However, performance was subpar. Exercise deficiencies included: difficulty prioritizing, executing, and controlling actions being conducted simultaneously at multiple locations; poor on-scene command performance; confusion over recent changes to site “sheltering” procedures; below average information management at the Emergency Operations Center; incorrect classification of the emergency; and some equipment material and operations problems. Exercise control was also deficient in some areas.^[II.A]

Authorization Basis Issues: Monday morning, March 13th, at 0001 CST, site operations shifted from *Pantex Critical Safety Systems Manual* [MNL-1101] control to Sitewide Technical Safety Requirements [RPT-SAR-199801] control. However, the expected concurrent implementation of the Master Authorization Agreement (MAA) did not take place. Corrective actions associated with the M&H Management Self-Assessment of the MAA were not completed in time, and a required a revision to the MAA was delivered to AAO for submission to DOE-AL late Monday. [Additional page changes to the submission were delivered even later in the week.] Implementation of the MAA, originally required March 3rd, then informally extended to March 13th, is now expected to occur some time next week -- once AAO has forwarded the MAA revision to DOE-AL for approval, and the DOE-AL Manager has signed it.^[II.A]

Readiness Issues: The W76 D&I Program contractor Readiness Assessment did not start as scheduled on Monday, and has, instead, been deferred ~1 week. The long pole in the tent appears to be DOE-AL approval of the contractor RA Plan of Action (POA) for this review.^[III.A]

Groundwater Issues: On Tuesday, TNRCC issued an enforcement notice to AAO, citing violation of the site Hazardous Waste permit, and violation of the Texas Water Code. AAO and TNRCC held a joint public [town-hall-style] meeting with local landowners Wednesday evening to discuss the trichloroethylene (TCE) contamination in the Ogallala aquifer. Over 170 people attended, keeping representatives of the Secretary of Energy, DOE-EH, DOE-EM, DOE-AL, AAO, M&H, the Governor’s office, TNRCC, the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District, the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, county and city government officials, local landowners, and broadcast/print media personnel busy for over 3 hours. Issues discussed included the known sample results and reporting times, TNRCC roles, TCE use (historically and at present), TCE toxicology, and Ogallala groundwater modeling. Short term corrective actions were also discussed, including the investigation into monitoring and reporting procedure shortcomings [by DOE-EH, as mandated by the Secretary of Energy] and development of a response plan [as aided by the DOE-EM assistance team, which the Secretary directed be assembled.] At least 4 additional wells are planned to help define the problem. AAO and TNRCC committed to expand involvement of and communication with the local landowners throughout this process.^[I.B]