

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 14, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: T. Dwyer and H. Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives

SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending November 14, 1997

DNFSB Activity Summary: Timothy Dwyer and Harry Waugh were on site Wednesday through Friday.

Dynamic Balancer: The Site Representatives and the Independent Review Team (IRT) Leader observed a final walkthrough (post-review) of the NEOP. Conduct of operations and PT knowledge levels appeared adequate. However, the NEOP itself still contained nearly a dozen errors (none of which were deemed fatal flaws by the IRT Leader). M&H has submitted its plan to close the IRT and Verification Team post-start findings to AAO, but it has been recalled to incorporate AAO comments twice so far. M&H has not yet begun the procurement process for the new POI fixture, but has informally acknowledged that they will follow that path forward once Design Agency concurrence with the physical configuration of the fixture is received.

Pit Storage -- AT-400A: Although 16 W48 pits have been packaged in AT-400As, only 6 of these have been accepted by DOE. The other 10 are on hold pending resolution of questions raised by a girth weld failure on the 17th package. The failure has been attributed to internal purge gas pressure being too high. An ultrasonic inspection of all girth welds (past and future) will be required. It appears that an acceptable inspection can be accomplished using a manual technique which was developed by a team of experts from the Design Agencies, Allied Signal, and M&H.

Pit Storage -- AL-R8 Insert: Development of a sealed insert for the AL-R8 is still being pursued by LLNL, SNL, and M&H. Although not intended for off-site transportation, prototypes of all 3 designs are being subjected to 20 and 4 foot drop tests. Currently, the M&H design is the only one to have survived the tests and then successfully pass the required post-drop leak check.

W69 Program: A problem with removing the physics package from the W69 warhead case has slowed dismantlement activity. There have been only 5 disassemblies in the last 2 weeks. Corrosion inside the canned package apparently has caused the (thin) can to swell, which makes removal of the package difficult. Several proposed changes to tooling and the NEOP are being considered to resolve the problem. It should be noted that M&H has been concentrating on processing the older (hardest) W69 units through disassembly first.

12-44 Cell 1: 12-44 Cell 1 has been out of commission since an accidental tritium release in 1989. Semi-annual surveys have shown contamination levels decreasing as expected: based on the last two surveys (April and October), Cell 1 has now been downgraded to a Radiological Material Management Area (RMMA). Custody of the cell has been transferred from Radiation Safety to Manufacturing, and after maintenance, the cell will be placed in service as a staging area.

Attachment

Upcoming Pantex Events:

November 17-19 -- Irreversibility (pit conversion to non-proliferable form) Meeting

November 17-21 -- NESD Annual Appraisal

November 19-20 -- Lightning Team Bay/Cell Walkdowns**

November 19-21 -- Congressional Committee Staffs visit:
Senate Armed Services, Senate Appropriations
House National Security, House Appropriations

November 21 -- W88 Mini Review**

[unknown] -- Dynamic Balancer startup

December 2 -- General Zettler visit

December 3 -- W69 Hemisphere/Detonator disposition begins (Zone 11)

December 10 -- Pit Thermal Meeting

[unknown] -- NES Electrical Tester Master Study completion

January 5-16 -- W56 SIRR

January 31 -- W56 SIID issued

January 22 -- W79 NESS starts

NOTES: ** highlights events which are new listings or for which schedule has changed