

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 19, 2018

MEMO TO: Steven Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: Ramsey Arnold and Zachery Beauvais, Pantex Plant Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Report for Week Ending January 19, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: C. Berg, M. Helfrich, and A. Hutain observed an emergency exercise and discussed Pantex progress in addressing DNFSB Recommendation 2015-1, *Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Pantex Plant*. C. Berg and the resident inspectors also reported to the emergency operations center (EOC) and monitored the situation during a separate, unplanned emergency event. Additionally, C. Berg and the resident inspectors attended portions of a nuclear explosive safety (NES) change evaluation (NCE) on the receipt, inspection, and staging of error code units (ECU) for a particular program. The NCE resulted in no findings and one deliberation topic discussing the acceptability for receipt and staging of future ECUs.

Emergency Event: CNS plant shift superintendents declared an operational emergency and activated the emergency response organization (ERO) based on the discovery of a suspicious package at an on-site shipping and receiving building. On-call ERO members were provided safe route information and the EOC was declared operational in a timely manner. The ERO, in conjunction with incident command, utilized approved procedures to respond to the event. Local authorities, including the Amarillo Police Department Bomb Squad, were contacted to support in the investigation of the suspicious package. The shipping and receiving building and a nearby building were safely evacuated. An alternate media center was stood up at the Kilgore Research Center so additional information could be shared with the public. The ERO also developed and executed a controlled evacuation plan to release the plant population through the west gate to avoid the event scene. Once the suspicious packaged was determined to pose no threat, the ERO terminated the emergency, allowing normal operations to resume. Immediately following the termination of the emergency, ERO members held a thorough hotwash, noting the response strengths as well as lessons learned and areas that could be improved.

Emergency Exercise: Pantex conducted an emergency exercise that simulated a seismic event that caused a radiological release and a fire at a separate facility. The staff observed multiple elements of the simulated response including activities at the EOC, incident command, event scene, and off-site related to the deployment of a radiation field monitoring team (FMT). The simulated radiological consequences did not spread off-site so the FMT strategy was for two teams to proceed to State of Texas-designated monitoring locations near and downwind of the plant to confirm that no contamination had spread off-site. The FMT was not being officially evaluated during the exercise as their procedures have not been finalized.

Hose Whip Specific Administrative Control (SAC): CNS declared a technical safety requirement violation when they discovered that a SAC to prevent hose whips had not been properly implemented into a nuclear explosive operating procedure (NEOP) on a particular weapon program. The SAC includes two requirements: (1) prior to pressurizing an air hose, production technicians (PT) shall locate or restrain the hose such that the extended length of hose will prevent a hose whip to an exposed unit, and (2) a second PT shall verify that this was completed. The issue was discovered during an unreviewed safety question review of a revision to the NEOP. Affected operations are paused while the NEOP is revised to properly implement the SAC.