

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 30, 2018

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: Zachery S. Beauvais, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending November 30, 2018

DNFSB Staff Activity: R. Tontodonato observed an NNSA Senior Management Team meeting and augmented the resident inspector's coverage.

Pauses and Restrictions: Following a recent event where production technicians completed a specific process in spite of an operational pause on those activities, CNS plant management temporarily paused all nuclear explosive operations (see 11/23/18 report). This week, CNS process engineering published a standing order delineating an interim process for controlling operations following a management pause. The process requires the CNS duty manager, a rotating role performed by a member of the senior management team with responsibility for addressing emerging operational issues, to concur on measures taken to ensure that operations cannot inadvertently resume when paused. Additionally, the process requires the duty manager to validate that all actions deemed necessary to safely resume operations are completed before they may lift any pauses. To support the initial implementation of the standing order, CNS engineering identified a list of all management pauses and restrictions that are currently in place but not formalized. The list includes pauses and restrictions related to nine total issues, impacting three separate weapon programs, SNM operations, and transportation activities. The issues identified on this list will be subject to the provisions of the standing order. Pauses and restrictions that are protected in published plant procedures or where procedures directing the work have been restricted from production use are exempted from the new process. Following implementation of the standing order, CNS plant management lifted the general pause on all nuclear explosive operations. CNS management intends to develop a permanent process for implementing pauses and restrictions in the coming months.

Lightning Protection System: Construction subcontractors completed the installation of a replacement pole to support the lightning protection catenary system following the identification of a degraded pole (see 11/1/18 and 11/9/18 reports). CNS maintenance personnel completed the annual preventive maintenance on the system to verify functionality following the installation. CNS plant management is reviewing the construction and maintenance records prior to lifting restrictions on transportation activities in the vicinity of the pole.

Tester Safety: NPO management convened a team to identify the cause of a design discrepancy that led to nuclear explosive resistance test failures earlier this year (see 8/3/18 report). CNS personnel led the team and interviewed design agency (DA) personnel. This week, the team released their final report. The team concluded that the root causes of the event were assumptions that previous design inputs for a predecessor tester would hold for the new tester, and that "the relationship between the DA and [Pantex], both historical and current, is not one in which clarifications are sought regarding technical issues." The team also identified that unclear product specifications for the tester contributed to the design discrepancy. The resident inspector and DNFSB staff previously observed the team's preliminary outbrief to NPO management and provided feedback on the evaluation. The CNS team shared their report with DA management and plan to develop corrective actions based on the results of the evaluation.