

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 3, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: W. White, Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending January 3, 2003

DNFSB Activity Summary: The Pantex Plant was closed on Wednesday for New Year's Day. W. White was on site for the remainder of the week.

W79 Dismantlement Program: Earlier this week, personnel supporting W79 dismantlement operations identified a procedure step that could not be accomplished. The step called for swiping a cover that had not been installed. Investigation by BWXT personnel indicated the nuclear explosive engineering procedure in use had inadvertently left out the step to install the cover. Production technicians were using this procedure in place of the normal operating procedure. The normal operating procedure required installation of the cover prior to vacating the facility, as the unit was in a configuration that required person-to-person coverage.

According to plant personnel, installation of a cover (or a sign, if a cover is not feasible) should occur before production technicians vacate a facility containing a unit in a configuration that requires person-to-person coverage. Without the cover in place (or a sign indicating the current configuration of the unit), there would be no visible indication to maintenance or other non-W79 personnel who might access the facility to indicate the configuration of the unit. However, neither current plant safety requirements as defined in Standard 7-5000, *General Safety Requirements - Production and Support Activities*, nor the procedure in use at the time identified a requirement to place a cover on the unit before vacating the facility. BWXT is currently investigating the incident to determine appropriate corrective actions. [II.A]

W84 Surveillance Operations: On Tuesday, PXSO sent a letter to NNSA Headquarters forwarding an explanation by BWXT of the status of W84 safety analysis information. The PXSO letter notes the absence of a current documented safety analysis, the need to exempt any proposed operations from safety analysis requirements in 10 CFR Part 830, *Nuclear Safety Management*, and the absence of a current nuclear explosive safety study (the most recent, expired study was conducted in 1992).

The PXSO letter also notes that the primary hazards associated with W84 operations, fire and lightning, are addressed in approved site-wide safety basis documents. The controls from these documents would be implemented prior to start up of W84 operations. [II.A]

Pit Repackaging Operations: For the first three months of FY03, BWXT repackaged pits into sealed-insert containers at a rate slightly less than the rate to which NNSA committed in its implementation plan for Recommendation 99-1. However, the slightly lower repackaging rate was planned due to holiday and other shutdown periods. Production over the remainder of FY03 should be sufficient to support an average repackaging rate for the fiscal year that is in line with NNSA's commitment to the Board. To date, the Pantex Plant has repackaged nearly half of the outstanding inventory of pits staged at the plant. [II.A]