

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 7, 2003

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** W. White, Pantex Site Representative  
**SUBJECT:** Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending March 7, 2003

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** W. White was on leave Wednesday and was on site for the remainder of the week.

**W62:** NNSA continued its Nuclear Explosive Safety Study of the W62 seamless safety process this week after temporarily suspending the study last Friday. The study was suspended on Friday as a result of concerns over the lack of readiness to demonstrate the W62 disassembly process to the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Group. The letter suspending the study cited procedures that were not sufficiently refined for operations, tooling that was not ready for demonstration, and a lack of trainer and facility fidelity. The letter from the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Chairman to the PXSO Manager noted that some of the concerns resulted from conflicting needs of the Readiness Assessment, which was ongoing at the same time.

Following discussions with PXSO and BWXT personnel, the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study Group was able to resolve its concerns and resume the study this week. Demonstrations of W62 operations will continue next week. Discussion of findings and report writing are expected to occur the first two weeks of April 2003. [II.A]

**Tooling Concerns:** While testing a lifting fixture for the W88 program this week, BWXT found the ultimate strength of a cable component to be significantly less than the vendor certification for the component. The vendor certification for the component is 2000 lbs. In at least two tests, the component failed around 1400 lbs. This is above the 5:1 design ratio required in plant tooling design standards, however.

In response to the test failures, BWXT suspended use of this lifting fixture and all similar fixtures for other programs (W76, W78, W87, etc.) As of Friday morning, use of the fixture remained suspended for all affected programs. For programs other than the W88, BWXT will test a number of fixtures for each program to determine whether the components meet vendor certification. For the W88 program, BWXT will replace the component with one that meets vendor specifications.

BWXT expects to perform a root cause analysis of the failure over the weekend. Potential concerns that must be addressed include the quality of the vendor certification program and whether other tools by the same vendor might have similar quality concerns. [II.A]

**W88 Seamless Safety Program:** The W88 SS-21 project team briefed the Standing Management Team today on progress in meeting accelerated tooling dates for implementation of SS-21 in bay operations. The project team reported the program is significantly behind schedule and suggested abandoning the accelerated tooling dates. In the latest revision of the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 98-2, the Secretary of Energy committed to the Board to complete SS-21 retooling for bay operations by May 2003. The Standing Management Team reaffirmed the need to accelerate SS-21 tooling for W88 bay operations and asked the W88 project team to develop a recovery plan. [II.A]