

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 19 May 2006
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

W88 Disassembly: In April, NNSA verbally directed BWXT to proceed with activities to restart W88 cell operations in order to obtain surveillance data that will support development of the full SS-21 process. Formal direction and project approval was provided this week from the Office of Nuclear Weapons Stockpile. Key tasks necessary to support reauthorization of operations include obtaining exemptions to 10CFR830 and DOE Order 452.2B, updating procedures, training production technicians, reconstituting tooling, and revising the Hazard Analysis Report. This high priority project has a targeted completion date of December 2006.

Loss of Power: On Sunday, the Pantex Operations Center (OC) lost power to several monitoring systems and other related systems. The plant shift supervisor (PSS) entered lightning warnings and fire department personnel initiated a fire watch. Since the PSS was unable to make a plant-wide announcement of lightning warnings, the PSS contacted security personnel who in turn communicated the warnings using hand radios. The loss of power event lasted approximately 50 minutes. There were no active nuclear explosive operations at the time. BWXT is planning to re-convene the critique to collect additional information regarding this incident.

B61 Program Reviews: NNSA recently accepted the Nuclear Explosive Safety Study (NESS) group's findings and approved the report resulting from the B61 review. NA-12 agreed with the minority opinion that no new controls are necessary to protect against nearby explosion hazards. NA-12 also approved the four B61-specific Nuclear Explosive Safety Rules (NESRs) recommended by the NESS group. Although all the suggested NESRs were incorporated in the operating procedures, they were not captured in the documented safety analysis. The NNSA readiness assessment wrapped up this week with no findings identified. Startup of the B61 SS-21 operations could begin as early as next week.

W87 Program Reviews: NNSA recently approved the report of the NESS group's recently completed review. PXSO management had challenged four of the pre-start findings and NA-12 generally agreed with PXSO by concluding that three of the findings should be recategorized as post-starts and the fourth issue was already adequately controlled. The NNSA readiness assessment wrapped up this week and identified three pre-start findings related procedure inadequacies. Different variations on multi-unit operations were demonstrated to the satisfaction of the RA team. W87 SS-21 operations are on track to start in about a month.

Pit Repackaging: During the first half of fiscal year 2006, BWXT packaged more than 370 pits into sealed insert (SI) containers. BWXT has a performance based incentive to repackage any pit that was in a non-SI container on 31 March into an SI container by 30 September. There were about 245 pits in non-SI containers on 31 March. Approximately 65 percent of those pits will not be repackaged into SI containers, the primary reasons being that they are needed to support life extension builds or for thermal testing.

Weapon Program Title 10 CFR 830 Compliance: In December 2005, PXSO requested that NNSA rescind the requirement for Pantex to provide NNSA monthly reports that document the progress that has been made to achieve 10CFR830 compliance for each weapon program. As a basis for rescinding this requirement, PXSO cited NA-122's management of weapon project schedules and BWXT's internal tracking systems. Last month, the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs granted PXSO's request.