

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: J. Kent Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Dave Kupferer, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 10 November 2006
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

DNFSB Staff Activity: R. Rosen and outside expert D. Boyd were at Pantex to observe the final week of the NNSA readiness assessment for B83 SS-21 operations.

Pit Storage: The pit design agencies (DA) recently issued specifications and guidance for storing pits in uncontrolled atmospheres. Potential safety concerns relate to the possibility of breaching pit seals and the associated risk of a contamination release. Pit in non-sealed-insert containers, which do not provide a dry inert environment, shall be limited to a storage duration of 24 consecutive months. The specification requires that Pantex notify both pit DAs when a pit has a cumulative exposure time of 18 months. Cumulative storage time commences when the units are removed from the weapon or sealed-insert container. Several life extension program and thermal testing pits currently exceed the storage time limit and BWXT is requesting DA analysis and direction on how to proceed.

W80 Seamless Safety for the 21st Century (SS-21): NNSA has directed BWXT to rebaseline the W80 SS-21 scope and schedule. Multi-unit processing and some testing operations will be removed from the initial project scope. The schedule to authorize SS-21 operations has been compressed to September 2007. Also, the time proposed for PXSO to review the Hazard Analysis Report was reduced from 40 to 30 working days.

Throughput Improvement: This week, the Senior Management Team (including representatives from NNSA, BWXT-Pantex, BWXT-Y-12, and the three national laboratories) met at Pantex to discuss throughput improvement initiatives affecting Pantex and Y-12. Of the 21 actions identified in the Pantex Throughput Improvement Plan (PTIP), 16 have been completed. Open PTIP actions include designing explosive barriers and assessing the potential implementation, assessing the scope of operating procedure change requests that require national laboratory approval, and assessing the basis for potentially revising stockpile surveillance requirements. It appears that the Senior Management Team has decided to discontinue use of the Integrated Weapons Activities Plan.

Standards/Requirements Identification Documents (S/RIDs): The BWXT Pantex contract uses S/RIDs to identify safety related requirements applicable to specific BWXT activities. In October 2005, BWXT submitted a project plan to PXSO that outlined a schedule for simultaneously phasing out the S/RIDs and implementing a Business Requirements and Instruction Network (BRAIN). The BRAIN is intended to improve BWXT personnel's knowledge of and compliance with administrative procedures by making them easier to find, easier to use, and directly linking the procedures to the related contractual and regulatory requirements (the BRAIN contains a database of administrative procedures – e.g., process documents and work instructions – not operating procedures). The October plan estimated that the BRAIN would be fully implemented by September 2007. Last week, BWXT submitted a revised plan to PXSO that pushes the project completion date out to April 2009.