

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 12, 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending April 12, 2002

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was on leave Monday and was on site for the remainder of the week.

Review by the DOE Office of the Inspector General: Personnel from the DOE Office of the Inspector General were on site this week to discuss concerns related to multiple extensions in the expiration dates of nuclear explosive safety studies (NESS's) for certain weapons operations at Pantex. The DNFSB site representatives met with the personnel from the Inspector General's office on Wednesday. The discussion focused on the Board's correspondence related to Recommendations 93-1 and 98-2. The site representatives reiterated that one of the Board's primary objectives with recent correspondence related to Recommendation 98-2 is to encourage NNSA and BWXT to implement safety enhancements for nuclear explosive operations as quickly as possible. The need by NNSA to extend NESS expiration dates on repeated occasions stems, in part, from delays in implementing safety enhancements and updating the safety basis for the affected weapons programs. [II.A]

DOE Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement Investigation: In March, ASO notified BWXT that the DOE Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement (DOE/OE) would conduct an investigation of potential Price-Anderson non-compliance concerns at the Pantex Plant. These concerns relate primarily to the number of procedure adherence violations over the past year. Personnel from DOE/OE were on site this week to gather information for the investigation. Personnel from BWXT presented a wide range of corrective actions related to procedural adherence problems in the areas of maintenance, material movements, and nuclear explosive operations. Many of these corrective actions were previously briefed to the Board and its staff following a Board reporting requirement to NNSA in October 2001. DOE/OE will continue its investigation over the next several weeks before reaching any conclusions with respect to possible enforcement actions. [II.A]

Procedural Adherence Occurrences: Over the past few months, BWXT has made progress with respect to improving its material movement system and reducing the number of procedural adherence violations related to material moves. However, over the past two weeks, two additional material movement occurrences were identified. On April 4, 2002, explosive materials were moved in the Zone 12 material access area without appropriate notification to the operations center. The movement did, however, occur during the time window set aside for explosive moves. On April 10, personnel loading accountable nuclear material into a shipping trailer for offsite shipment failed to make appropriate notifications after loading the trailer.

In addition to the material movement occurrences, a procedural violation was also reported in early April with respect to disassembly and inspection operations for a nuclear explosive program. Production technicians deviated from written procedures while performing work on a nuclear explosive, leading to the omission of a required quality test for the unit. While BWXT continues to address the site-wide concern with procedural adherence in an aggressive manner, it appears, based on the ongoing occurrences, that significant effort is still required. [II.A]