

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 7, 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 June 7, 2002

DNFSB Activity Summary: The Board's LANL Site Representative, C. Keilers, was on site Thursday and Friday to attend the Standing Management Team Meeting.

Separations Test Facility Restart: On Wednesday, BWXT completed its contractor operational readiness review (CORR) for restarting the separations test facility. This CORR had originally started in March 2002, but was suspended because the facility was not ready to restart operations. The CORR resumed on May 22, 2002. There were 23 pre-start findings during the CORR, 12 of which were identified during the second phase. Many of the findings and several observations appeared to address level of knowledge or training issues. These included concerns on how the reader-worker process, person-to-person coverage, and hoisting operations were conducted. Concerns were also raised with respect to the level of knowledge for combustible loading requirements and general plant safety standards. [II.A]

W88 Milestone 1 Meeting: On Friday, the W88 project team briefed the Standing Management Team (SMT) on the conceptual design and schedule of the seamless safety (SS-21) program for the W88. The current Integrated Weapons Activity Plan shows startup of the W88 SS-21 program in April 2004. The earliest W88 schedule presented at the milestone meeting showed startup of the SS-21 program in June 2004. Two primary issues prompted the SMT to postpone any decisions regarding the path forward for the W88 SS-21 program:

- C No decision has been made on whether to proceed with development of a new primary assembly process for the W88 program. A decision to implement a new process could have a significant impact on the tooling for assembly operations in the cell. The W88 project team presented a schedule and tooling sketches that incorporate a conceptual design for a new process, but it was not clear whether this conceptual process would meet design agency expectations. The project team also presented a schedule for the SS-21 project that implemented the existing primary assembly process, but the project team did not know whether the existing primary assembly process was compatible with the conceptual tooling designs presented.
- C In recent discussions on the implementation of Board Recommendation 98-2, both BWXT and NNSA senior management have committed to the Board to accelerate the development of SS-21 tooling for the W78 and W88 programs. The W88 project team had decided to accelerate tooling for bay operations, but not to accelerate implementation of cell tooling. Since bay operations are relatively lower risk, it is not clear how the maximum safety benefit would be achieved by accelerating tooling implementation for the lower hazard processes. The W88 project team highlighted difficulties with implementation of major tooling changes and uncertainties with the primary assembly process as rationale for abandoning accelerated SS-21 tooling for cell operations. These issues with accelerated SS-21 tooling for the W88 program also apply, in large part, to the idea of accelerated SS-21 tooling for the W78 program.

At the direction of the SMT, the W88 project team will present revised schedules for various project options (with and without accelerated cell tooling, with and without a new primary assembly process) at the next SMT meeting. [II.A]