

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 20, 2002

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director  
**FROM:** W. White, Pantex Site Representative  
**SUBJECT:** Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending December 20, 2002

**DNFSB Activity Summary:** W. White was onsite all week. R. Rauch and R. West were on site this week to observe the NNSA readiness assessment for implementation of controls in the *Fire Protection Basis for Interim Operation*.

**Fire Protection Basis for Interim Operation (FBIO):** The NNSA's Pantex Site Office (PXSO) continued its Readiness Assessment (RA) this week for implementation of controls from the FBIO for individual weapon programs and special purpose facilities. BWXT has implemented fire protection controls for 9 weapon systems and multiple facilities. Contractor RAs were performed after the implementation of controls for an individual weapon program or group of facilities. The NNSA RA, a deliverable to the Board under Recommendation 98-2, started after BWXT closed all pre-start findings and made the controls applicable as technical safety requirements.

To assess the implementation of multiple controls for numerous facilities and programs, NNSA sampled the status of implementation by observing three weapon programs. Constraints on the availability of the review team members and the limited two-week assessment schedule limited observations involving the handling of combustible materials. Despite this, significant deficiencies were noted with two of the three sampled programs. Findings addressed adherence to procedures, location and minimization of combustible materials, and adequacy of procedures. This week, the RA team completed field work and drafted findings from the two week review. PXSO has not determined a path forward for finalizing the assessment. The assessment may be extended early next year to evaluate the complexity of the control scheme and determine why some weapon programs appeared more successful at implementation than others. [II.A]

**W62 Readiness Assessment:** BWXT continues its effort to finalize implementation of the new seamless safety process for W62 disassembly and inspection operations. A verification of readiness by BWXT manufacturing personnel is underway and is expected to conclude in January 2003. A readiness assessment by BWXT is scheduled to begin January 13, 2003, with an NNSA readiness assessment following in early February 2003.

On Tuesday, the Board's staff held a telephone conference with PXSO and BWXT personnel to discuss the readiness assessment process for W62 operations. BWXT and PXSO proposed conducting contractor and NNSA readiness assessments of the W62 program in training facilities instead of the actual nuclear facilities in which the operations would take place. The primary motivation is that the cell intended for use in the W62 program will not be available until the end of March 2003. Conducting the W62 readiness assessment in training facilities in January and February will allow BWXT to begin its pilot lot of W62 operations in an actual nuclear facility as early as April, after following the standard plant checklist used to move operations from one set of facilities to another. If this assessment approach is successful, BWXT and PXSO will continue to use training facilities for future program assessments.

The staff expressed concern with potential problems from using a lower fidelity demonstration to assess interactions between operations and the facility, particularly with respect to the implementation of fire protection and lightning protection controls. However, the use of a checklist to move operations from one nuclear facility to another is a standard practice at the Pantex Plant, and the authorization bases for operations and facilities are separate entities. Both BWXT and PXSO indicated they will carefully monitor the adequacy of the W62 readiness assessment process. [II.A]