DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: Timothy Hunt and Rory Rauch, Pantex Site Representatives
DATE: 23 January 2009
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Weekly Report

W88 Operations: B&W Pantex remains on schedule to authorize W88 cell and mass properties operations by March 2009. The contractor readiness assessment (CRA) of W88 cell operations was completed last week. Seven pre-start and three post-start findings were identified. The CRA team documented issues such as inadequate flowdown of technical safety requirements (TSRs) into implementing documents, inconsistencies between the wording of TSRs in the TSRs document and the applicable documented safety analysis, and procedures that could not be performed as written. Pending closure of the pre-start findings, the CRA team concluded that the project team was adequately prepared to perform W88 cell operations. NNSA is planning to delay the readiness assessment (RA) of W88 cell operations (originally scheduled for 4 February) and merge it with the W88 mass properties RA, scheduled for the week of 23 February.

Last week, NNSA completed the nuclear explosive safety study (NESS) of W88 mass properties operations. The coordination copy of the report, which was provided to NA-122 for approval, identified one pre-start finding concerning the impact of duct tape on the electrical isolation of mass properties equipment. Of note, the on-site portion of the NESS review was conducted with only one of the two required senior technical advisors (STAs) as one STA had to leave for personal reasons. The NESS continued after the chair received verbal approval from NNSA management to deviate from this requirement. Except as noted in the finding, the NESS group concluded that W88 mass properties operations meet NES standards.

W62 Operations: During dismantlement operations, the production technicians (PTs) inadvertently executed and checked off two procedural steps that were not required to be performed. Upon recognizing the incorrect option was selected, work was stopped, the two checked off steps were lined out and initialed (no backout was required), and the proper steps were performed to complete the operation. A procedural clarification is being processed through engineering to better describe the applicable weapon configuration for each of two processing options. The actions of the PTs did not have a direct affect on the safety of the operation. Manufacturing management responded quickly and appropriately to communicate and address the issue.

Fire Suppression System: The Pantex safety basis requires that each of two diesel pumps supporting the high pressure fire loop be capable of providing 2500 gpm at 100 psig at the pump. It was discovered during a recent maintenance activity that the pumps were supplying about 10 percent less than the required flow rate, a TSR violation. The pumps were installed about 20 years ago with the engine speed set for a zero flow condition; that is, at a reduced power output. Power to each diesel pump has since been increased to provide the requisite flow rate.

Graveyard Shift: Programmatic nuclear explosive operations (NEOs) on the graveyard shift were curtailed Friday for the foreseeable future. Funding constraints and a lack of a compelling production driver were factors in the discontinuation of two-shift operations on the W80. Radiography activities are the only NEOs that will continue on the graveyard shift.