

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 19, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending January 19, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: The site office was closed Monday for a federal holiday.

Robotic Weigh and Leak Check System: The DOE Amarillo Area Office authorized the start up of the robotic weigh and leak check system (WALS) in Building 12-116 this week. The contractor reported to DOE that all pre-start findings had been addressed. Operations may start up as early as next week.

It is not clear, however, that the actions taken to address the finding from the DOE readiness assessment team on software quality assurance (computer software changes are not effectively captured in the USQ process) were effective. The contractor completed a screen of the existing computer software in response to the finding, but no adequate measures were taken to formalize the method by which changes to WALS software are screened under the USQ process. DOE does intend, however, to address this finding on a site-wide basis in the upcoming assessment of the Pantex USQ process. This assessment of the USQ process is a deliverable in Revision 1 of the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 98-2. ^[II.A]

Sprinkler Actuation in 12-85: A wet pipe sprinkler head in the decontamination room for Building 12-85 actuated this week, apparently inadvertently. The decontamination room is no longer used for that purpose; it is currently being used to store used bicycles. Building 12-85 had no nuclear material inventory at the time of the actuation. Although no clear cause exists for the actuation, the following have been identified as potential causes:

- The sprinkler head may not have been installed per NFPA requirements. The sprinkler head was located near a heating unit, but it was not rated for a high temperature installation. Personnel involved in a critique of the incident were unclear whether this installation of a sprinkler head with a lower temperature rating, contrary to code requirements, was intentional.
- The heater near the sprinkler head may have created a temperature rise above the lower limit of the sprinkler head. Initial testing by MHC did not indicate an excessive rise in temperature, but subsequent monitoring of the temperature in the area is planned.
- The sprinkler head may have failed due to a defect. ^[II.A]

Hazardous Waste Treatment and Processing Facility: MHC conducted a contractor readiness assessment this week for the new Hazardous Waste Treatment and Processing Facility. The facility will be used to treat and process low-level radioactive waste. The quantities of various radioactive materials in the facility will be administratively controlled to ensure they remain below the lower limits for a Category 3 nuclear facility. This was the second contractor readiness assessment for the facility, which is located in Buildings 16-18 and 16-18A. The previous assessment in September 2000 identified 16 pre-start findings and required reassessment in the functional areas of emergency management, conduct of operations, safety documentation, and training. The contractor readiness reassessment this week identified 2 pre-start findings, both related to inadequacies in the preventive maintenance board. ^[II.A]