

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 2, 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 March 2, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was on annual leave Monday and on site Tuesday through Friday. J. Deplitch, M. Forsbacka, and L. McGrew were on site Tuesday through Thursday to review W76 and W88 operations.

W76 Disassembly and Inspection Operations: As of this week, three W76 units have completed disassembly and inspection operations under the new SS-21 process. Three additional W76 units are currently being processed, and the Board's staff observed disassembly and inspection (D&I) operations on one of these units. The staff observed production technicians in provisional status working under the guidance of experienced technicians. The staff was favorably impressed with the quality of the guidance provided by the experienced technicians and the general knowledge of the technicians with regard to understanding safety controls. ^[II.A]

W88 Disassembly, Inspection and Rebuild Operations: Disassembly and inspection operations have been completed for one W88 unit and are in process for another. BWXT moved the first W88 unit to undergo cell operations under the Step 1 SS-21 process to the W88 cell on Friday. Cell disassembly and inspection operations are expected to begin next week. Staff members were at Pantex this week to observe W88 disassembly, inspection, and training operations. Controls appeared to be adequately implemented for the facility and operations. The production technicians appeared professional and competent, and observed training appeared appropriate. However, there did not appear to be adequate awareness of radiation exposure levels from the W88's intrinsic radiation. ^[II.A]

Safety Evaluation Report (SER) for the Fire Basis for Interim Operation (BIO): On Tuesday, DOE's Amarillo Area Office issued its SER approving the Fire BIO and an associated revision to the Pantex Technical Safety Requirements. The SER contained 18 conditions of approval and 23 deferred comments to be entered into the BWXT corrective action tracking system. Most of the conditions of approval require explicit actions by BWXT. These actions include obtaining design agency concurrence with the methodology used in the *Hughes Report*, justifying the acceptability of using of only electric pumps for high pressure fire loop (HPFL) operability (the HPFL is safety-class, the electrical power system is not), and reinstating a limit on the size of flammable solvent containers. The resolution to a few conditions of approval may be difficult. In particular, DOE found that the proposed shadowing controls, intended to enhance the reliability of the ultraviolet detectors, may not be sufficiently reliable. ^[II.A]

Pit Repackaging Status: BWXT personnel repackaged 122 pits during the month of February. As of the end of February, 564 pits had been repackaged for FY01. This exceeds DOE's goal of 500 pits for the first five months of the fiscal year, but falls well short of the 200 pit per month repackaging rate discussed in DOE's Implementation Plan for Recommendation 99-1. BWXT personnel have begun to implement measures to speed up the repackaging rate with available resources. This includes increasing the number of pits staged in sealed-insert repackaging bays and increasing the time spent operating purge and backfill equipment. ^[II.A]