

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 28, 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 September 28, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh and W. White were on site all week.

W78 Contractor Readiness Assessment: BWXT resumed its contractor readiness assessment for the W78 program on Wednesday afternoon. Observations began on Wednesday with demonstrations of the W78 repair procedure. Problems observed during the review so far include the following:

- The report from the technical assist (TA) conducted after the initial suspension of the contractor readiness assessment had a disclaimer noting that “the shortfalls of this TA have been discussed with Dave Alger . . . Future TAs will be mandated by division management and the SMEs [subject matter experts] will be detailed to the TA team to ensure the team has the resources available to conduct a thorough assistance . . .” Given the previous suspension of the readiness assessment for this program, it is not clear why senior management personnel were willing to begin a readiness assessment without an adequate technical assist.
- Certain procedure steps could not be accomplished as written.
- Some steps required to be identified as critical steps were not so identified.
- The lightning stand-off distance for the W78 bay was not correctly marked. Facility personnel have noted the errors and will make corrections at a later time.
- The combustible loading procedure does not contain all the materials needed to conduct operations.
- Equipment and tooling tables in the repair procedure contain numerous errors, an observation also noted in the original CRA. Although a significant number of errors are still present, it appears there are substantially fewer errors than noted in the original CRA.
- The procedures contain appendices defining electrical troubleshooting allowed in the case of certain electrical test failures. This violates a general nuclear explosive safety rule and will be reviewed during the W78 nuclear explosive safety study.
- Information on procedures at hand was inaccurate in the MRP computer system.

The contractor readiness assessment will continue on Monday with demonstrations of mechanical disassembly operations. Provided verification of readiness is possible, the contractor readiness assessment is expected to conclude early in the week of October 8. Considering the previous attempt at the CRA was suspended, it was interesting that no AAO personnel were present for any of the operational demonstrations through Friday afternoon. [II.A]

Enhanced Transportation Cart: A design meeting was held on Thursday for the enhanced transportation cart project. Prototype ETC 1 carts (carts for transporting fully assembled nuclear explosives) have been fabricated by the vendor. Following fabrication, however, BWXT personnel found the carts to be difficult to maneuver in certain areas. Modifications are currently being made to the carts to enhance maneuverability. The prototype carts may be at Pantex as early as next week. The first implementation of the carts will be on the W76 program. Implementation on this program is scheduled for the end of this calendar year. [II.A]