

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 26, 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 October 26, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was at Texas Tech University on Tuesday and was on site for the remainder of the week.

Procedural Compliance Issues: Over the past two weeks, additional procedural compliance issues have arisen at Pantex beyond those commented on by the Board in its recent letter to NNSA. On Monday, BWXT personnel moved weapons components without authorization from the Operations Center. According to procedures recently established by BWXT in response to multiple earlier occurrences involving movement of materials, personnel were to call the Explosives Tracking Center for an authorization number. The Explosives Tracking Center provided initial concurrence, and the Operations Center was to call back to the person conducting the move with final approval. However, the move was initiated before the Operations Center approval was obtained. To address this issue on a short-term basis, BWXT issued a standing order requiring the Explosives Tracking Center (or the Nuclear Material Control Center) to keep the person initiating the movement of material on the phone until all approvals for conducting the move have been obtained. A long-term solution to create a simpler, more automated process for approving moves of nuclear material or explosives is underway.

Late last week, a W87 was disassembled in preparation for the assembly of a test bed. During the build up of the test bed, it was discovered that the production technicians had assembled a configuration other than that specified. Discussions with the design agency resulted in the alternate configuration being accepted by the design agency.

NNSA currently plans to brief the Board on the continuing procedural adherence issues on October 31. [II.A]

FY01 Sealed-Insert Container Surveillance: In March 2000, DOE provided the Board with the Pantex plan for surveillance of AL-R8 sealed-insert containers. This plan was provided to meet a commitment made to the Board under Recommendation 99-1. Under this plan, DOE and the Pantex Plant committed to an initial five year surveillance run of 92 containers per year. The containers chosen for surveillance include those containing pits requested by the design agencies for the pit surveillance program plus additional containers, chosen at random, to complete the total of 92. At a minimum, the surveillance of each container includes visual inspections of the container, packing material, sealed insert, and valve seal; leak testing of the sealed insert; moisture sampling of the sealed insert; gas sampling of the sealed insert; and destructive testing of two flange bolts.

At the end of September, the Pantex Plant had conducted surveillance on 82 sealed-insert containers. This is ten fewer than promised for FY01 in the surveillance plan. The failure to meet FY01 surveillance commitments resulted partly from recent work delays related to security. The impact of the delays was exacerbated by the postponement of most FY01 surveillance work until the last two months of the fiscal year. Given the work delays, AAO will allow BWXT to allocate the first 10 containers evaluated in FY02 towards the FY01 requirement. This will still leave a backlog of 84 containers which were missed in FY00. The surveillance of only 8 containers in FY00 puts DOE and the Pantex Plant about one year behind schedule in the five year surveillance plan. BWXT and AAO are currently negotiating a proposal to conduct all required surveillance operations for FY02 plus part of the existing FY00 backlog, with the remainder of the FY00 backlog being eliminated in FY03. [II.A]