

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 16, 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 November 16, 2001

DNFSB Activity Summary: The DNFSB Pantex site office was closed on Monday for the Veterans' Day Holiday. H. Waugh was on site for the remainder of the week. W. White was at Rice University on Wednesday and Thursday and was on site for the remainder of the week. D. Nichols, L. McGrew, and R. West were on site all week to observe the W78 Nuclear Explosive Safety Study and NNSA W78 Readiness Assessment.

W78 Independent Safety Reviews: NNSA continued its nuclear explosive safety study (NESS) this week for W78 disassembly, inspection, and repair operations. To date, the NESS group has compiled a list of over fifty topics that require further discussion and deliberation. The NESS group, along with the NNSA readiness assessment (RA) team, observed demonstrations of bay operations and vacuum chamber operations for the W78 program.

The NNSA RA of W78 disassembly, inspection, and repair operations started this week and was conducted in conjunction with the W78 NESS. The RA will continue the week after Thanksgiving, along with the NESS, with the demonstration of cell operations. The RA is expected to complete that week. Several issues have been identified and are being investigated. Among the preliminary issues identified so far are deficiencies with the flowdown of safety controls, inaccuracies in the safety basis database, and the lack of sufficient numbers of certified operators. [II.A]

Tooling Issues: BWXT continues to work on corrective actions to address the multiple occurrences over the past year associated with tools used in nuclear explosive operations. One of the primary corrective actions will be to implement a tooling tryout facility in Zone 12. The facility, converted from existing storage space, will allow critical tooling to be tested and evaluated prior to use in a nuclear explosive area. The facility is expected to be operational on a limited basis by the end of this calendar year. Other corrective actions in progress include enhancing receipt and inspection requirements for new tools and strengthening the drawing control process during initial tool fabrication. [II.A]

W87 Nuclear Explosive Tester: On Monday, BWXT personnel identified a W87 nuclear explosive tester that had been past its calibration date for over a week. During this time, the tester was used to conduct tests related to the position of a weapon safety component for two W87 units. These two units were placed in a hold status following identification of this issue. The tester was subsequently

evaluated by metrology personnel who determined that the tester performance was still within specification. NNSA then released the units from hold status without requiring that BWXT conduct the tests again.

Plant standards require that nuclear explosive testers in a nuclear explosive area have a valid calibration sticker. This calibration should have been checked at least daily. However, W87 production technicians apparently overlooked the expired calibration during pre-operational checks for at least a week. A significant contributing factor was likely the fact that the tester copy on the facility calibration board was noted as having a current calibration sticker. However, the tester actually in the facility was not the copy on the calibration board. [II.A]