

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

July 25, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director

FROM: T. Dwyer and H. Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives

SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for the Week Ending July 25, 1997

DNFSB Activity Summary: Timothy Dwyer and Harry Waugh were on site all week. Matthew Moury was on site through Thursday observing the AT-400A ORR. Cynthia Miller was on site through Thursday attending Hazard Assessment Team and Pit Thermal Working Group meetings. Josephine Covino was on site through Wednesday meeting site high explosives experts.

Pit Thermal Issues: Of major concern was a discussion of new temperature requirements for FL pit containers. These were delivered to M&H by memorandum from Steve Nunley, DOE-AL NESD. The memorandum specifies maximum allowable ambient temperatures for certain pit types. Ambient temperature requirements have never been specified before. Discussions highlighted the following points:

- The new ambient temperature requirements are all lower than 100°F. M&H does not provide air conditioning or monitor temperature in the ramps or loading docks, where temperatures are known to exceed 100°F. A further new requirement mandates that FLs containing certain pit types not be exposed to the sun.
- Although these requirements were delivered “effective immediately” in a memorandum dated May 27, 1997; to date no action has been taken at Pantex to respond or to comply.
- It is unclear whether the basis for these requirements was developed by or with design agency assistance. The agencies have previously transmitted maximum pit temperature specifications via LANL specification 2Y-59368 and LLNL specification RM257643.
- A July 22, 1997, Nunley memorandum states that failure of M&H and RFETS to meet a July 25, 1997, deadline to submit revised FL packaging procedures to address these new requirements will result in the loss of approval to use the FL, which could affect shipments of pits from RFETS to Pantex.

W69 Authorization Agreement: Sunday night, July 21st, Pantex’s first Authorization Agreement (AA), involving the W69, was signed; Monday, M&H was given permission by AAO to commence work on the W69. Tuesday morning, M&H violated one of the controls in the AA by bringing two units into Zone 12 through an unauthorized loading dock. Root causes of this event are still being investigated by M&H and AAO, but include incomplete dissemination of controls, and incomplete understanding of control-implementing mechanisms. W69 operations are not shut down during this investigation. First unit disassembly was completed Friday.

AT-400A ORR: The AT-400A Pit Repackaging DOE ORR began this week and will continue through next week. Operations demonstrated for the ORR team to date have been conducted in a very formal manner by extremely knowledgeable operators (*engineering technicians* (ETs), not *production technicians* (PTs)). No major findings have been identified.

Lightning Protection: M&H has implemented the specific “Interim Guidelines” applicable to the W88, B83, W79, W69, W62, and B61-5. To meet the recommended Faraday cage configuration, unbonded penetrations into active bays and cells have been identified and bonded at

their entry points using #6 wire, after some dispute among SNL personnel as to the correct gauge. SNL is preparing a further modification to the “Interim Guidance” to authorize stand-off distances of 40 inches (instead of 84 inches) from unbonded penetrations, given the results of further research into concrete dielectric constants.

B61-3 Recovery: Disassembly of the B61-3 unit involved in the June 6th event is complete.

Attachment

Upcoming Pantex Events:

[in progress] -- DOE AT-400A ORR

July 28–August 8 -- W56 Dismantlement Demo for HATT

August 11 -- W87 SEP starts

August 11–15 -- Major Sitewide Emergency Exercise [event to occur August 13]

August 11–15 -- W56 project team and SE Validation

August 13 -- W78 SS-21 Milestone I Meeting

August 18 -- W56 SIIR starts

August 18 -- Dynamic Balancer IRT

August 25 -- Dynamic Balancer startup