

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 30, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending May 30, 1997

1. DNFSB Activity Summary: Harry Waugh was on leave this week. Jim McConnell and Matt Moury provided Site Representative coverage.

2. W69 NESS and HAR: Pantex is continuing work to resolve the W69 pre-start issues raised by the DOE reviews. At this point it appears that the system-specific issues with the W69 dismantlement process are on a path to resolution. There are four more generic issues: lightning protection, ramp transportation safety, fire protection, and seismic concerns, that may be more problematic. Some of the previously more pressing issues, particularly seismic issues, may be resolved soon. In the mean time, MHC is evaluating the feasibility of moving the mechanical dismantlement operation from Building 12-64 to 12-84 (a newer and more "robust" facility). The Board staff has concluded that this would be a wise idea and has not yet heard a compelling argument against the move.

3. AT-400A ORR: The DOE ORR Team for the AT400A pit repackaging met for pre-ORR orientation and training. The start of the ORR is contingent on completion of the safety basis documentation for the welder modifications and completion of a successful contractor ORR, scheduled to begin in the middle of June. The start date for the DOE ORR will not be decided until after the contractor ORR is in progress and it is clear there are no major issues that would delay the DOE ORR. Current plans are to package the first unit in July 1997. Only the W48 will be packaged in the new containers at a rate of about 20 per month. The decision to package other pit types in the AT400A is still under discussion. Pantex is also working on developing a new sealed and backfilled vessel to be used as an insert in existing AL-R8 containers.

4. W79 Dismantlement: At the request of DOE-AL, the W79 Project Team has prepared a plan that would pull up the First Dismantlement Unit (FDU) date from the spring of 1998 to December 1997. This plan suggests several changes (such as combining internal MHC reviews into one comprehensive review) that are probably feasible and may accelerate the project. Other proposals in the plan (such as eliminating the independent readiness review prior to introducing live HE into the DMSO workstation) are more contentious. The project team presented the plan to DOE-AL on Thursday. Reportedly, DOE-AL management concluded that the plan is too controversial to accept without more thought and coordination with DOE Headquarters. At this point, the Board staff is unaware of an explicit evaluation of the benefits and risks of the plan or a clear explanation of the driver to pull up FDU from the spring of 1998.