

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: Timothy Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: Tom Spatz, Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Report for Week Ending September 14, 2012

DBFSB Staff Activity: M. Sautman was at Pantex this week to provide site representative support.

Conduct of Maintenance: This week, B&W Pantex held a critique for an event where the Impairment and Restoration (I&R) Department started to restore a safety system in the wrong facility. The I&R Department had already impaired and closed the valves to the deluge system in Bays 3 and 4. The I&R technicians were preparing to restore the ultra-violet detector system, at the Det-Tronics® control panel, for Bay 4 to support operations in that bay. Two I&R technicians were acting as the reader and worker, and a third was monitoring the fire alarm control panel in the same room. The technician monitoring the fire alarm control panel noticed the worker turning the circuit keys on Bay 3, rather than Bay 4, and stopped the work. The I&R supervisor monitoring the operation notified the Facility Representative.

At the critique, B&W management questioned the practice of working on safety systems using procedures developed for a different facility. The I&R planner could not find the exact procedure for this impairment to be performed at this building. The I&R supervisor received permission from the Fire Protection Engineer to use a procedure for a different building with a similar Det-Tronics® control panel. The I&R supervisor edited the building and bay numbers in the procedure. The procedure is identical with respect to restoring the Det-Tronics®; however the procedure did not include a step for the worker to confirm he was working on the correct system, or to have a second person confirm this. DNFSB staff members will be on site next week to perform a conduct of maintenance review.

Anomalous Unit Determination: This week, B&W Pantex discovered another unit with cracked explosives. Using the definitions provided in the interim guidance on anomalous units recently issued by NNSA (see 4/20/12 report); B&W nuclear explosive safety, B&W process engineering, and a Design Agency representative collectively determined that the unit did not meet the definition of anomalous. B&W Pantex requested Los Alamos National Laboratory, Weapon Response group, to verify that the weapon response values Pantex intends to use are appropriate for this unit.

Process Anomaly: B&W Pantex paused operations in a facility this week due to a process anomaly which resulted in a weapon configuration that required weapon responses from the Design Agency. During disassembly operations, PTs discovered that a ferrule was no longer attached to a tube. The PTs stopped work and radiation technicians performed swipes to determine if the tube had been breached. When the swipes came back negative, the Production Section Manager, with concurrence from the Process Engineer, gave permission to the PTs to resume work. The PTs found the ferrule sometime after work had resumed. The following day, the Process Engineering Section Manager paused operations a second time to have the situation evaluated further. B&W Pantex has formally requested weapon response information from the Design Agency.