

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 22, 2016

MEMO TO: Steven Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: Ramsey Arnold and Zachery Beauvais, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Report for Week Ending April 22, 2016

DNFSB Staff Activity: Ramsey Arnold reported for duty as a Pantex Site Representative on April 18, 2016. Doug Brown and John Mercier observed activities related to the B61 Nuclear Explosive Safety Study.

Readiness Verification (RV): CNS personnel began a readiness verification review in preparation to start up disassembly operations on one weapon program. Operations on this program were discontinued in 2012. The site representatives observed demonstrations in support of the readiness verification. The startup will require a federal readiness assessment, currently planned for August 2016.

Maintenance Program: The CNS Pantex Infrastructure Director conducted a series of “quality pause” briefings with Infrastructure and Maintenance personnel. The pauses were performed as a corrective action for a recent event where maintenance technicians performed work in a facility without proper authorization (see 3/11/2016 report). A site representative attended one of these sessions. The briefing outlined the importance of reliable infrastructure to the Pantex mission, discussed the details of recent events—including the inadvertent release of a deluge system and incomplete testing of ultraviolet flame detector latent failure modes—with an emphasis on failed barriers, and reinforced expectations for personnel to pause work when needed.

CNS issued an updated corrective action plan (CAP) to address concerns raised by NPO and the DNFSB regarding conduct of maintenance and issues management (see 1/26/2016 and 3/18/2016 reports). The updated CAP includes a timeline for completing specific improvements including the following commitments: develop a standing order and revise a work instruction to communicate expectations for placekeeping when executing specific use procedures, revise an existing desk aid to assist in performing effective pre-job briefings and revise a manual to define criteria for when engineering field verification of maintenance procedures is required.

Nuclear Explosive Operations: While observing disassembly operations in a nuclear explosive bay, a site representative observed a piece of special tooling hanging from an electrical outlet box. The site representative had previously noted the same condition in a separate facility conducting work on the same weapon program (see 2/26/2016 report). In response to the first observation, the Production Section Manager had begun discussing the proper staging locations for special tooling during his daily briefings with the specific crew. In response to this latest observation, this practice will be extended to other crews performing work on the same program. During the same operations, PTs performed a hoist lift required by the nuclear explosive operating procedure to place the cased canned subassembly in an Enhanced Transportation Cart, Type 2. Immediately prior to performing the lift, but after having read the step directing the lift, a PT appropriately questioned whether a hoist check had been performed that day and proceeded to perform the check. For this specific operation, due to the infrequency of hoist lifts, the check is not included as part of the daily pre-operational checks. Additionally, there is not a specific direction or caution in the NEOP to verify that the check was performed. This practice currently relies on the training of the PTs to ensure that the check is performed.