

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 10, 2021

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Gurevitch, M. Bradisse (acting), and C. Berg (acting), Resident Inspectors
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending December 10, 2021

Nuclear Explosive Safety (NES): Last month, a NES study group (NESSG) finalized its report regarding modifications to a cable used to perform an electrical test on a certain weapon program (see 11/12/21 report). Specifically, the proposal before the NESSG was the removal of some shielding from the cable to improve the testing pass rate; this modification would necessitate reliance on administrative controls for certain hazard scenarios. The project team asserted that using this solution as a temporary measure, while pursuing an engineered solution to the problem, provided adequate safety. The NESSG agreed with this assertion but noted that the proposal was not ideal, and recorded a deliberation topic to this effect. In its transmittal memo, NPO reaffirmed that there were no NES concerns related to this modification and did not direct any action to address the deliberation topic.

Safety Basis: In a letter to CNS earlier this year, NPO identified issues related to the CNS process for declaring potential inadequacies in the safety analysis (PISA), primarily related to timeliness in making determinations related to discrepant as-found conditions (DAFC) and situations involving the new information (NI) process (see 10/8/21 report). The letter identified that PISA determinations related to DAFCs were not being made within three business days of the problem identification submittal—a requirement of the governing procedure. The letter further suggested that CNS should conservatively declare a PISA if a determination cannot be easily made within that timeframe and the condition also cannot be readily brought back into compliance with the safety basis.

In a response letter issued two weeks ago week, CNS committed to revise the governing procedure to formally incorporate this feedback. The letter also stated that CNS would evaluate options to ensure situations involving NI are appropriately dispositioned in a timely manner; when complete, the intent is that this will address NPO's concern that PISA determinations are sometimes inappropriately delayed for months or years.

Issues Management: This week, NPO transmitted a report to CNS detailing conclusions from a recent assessment of corrective actions in response to occurrence reporting and performance problems. NPO recorded one finding, four performance problems, and four observations. The finding pertained to incomplete, inappropriate, and missing evidence in documentation to support closure for a specific corrective action related to lockout/tagout procedures. NPO personnel determined that the issue should not have been closed in the CNS issues management system due to these deficiencies. Further, NPO expressed significant concern that the issue was closed despite CNS issues management personnel explicitly notifying responsible issue owners of these deficiencies. The report also highlighted other instances of corrective actions being closed without sufficient documented evidence of completion, as well as actions that would not have prevented the corresponding initial event.