

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 13, 2022

TO: Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director
FROM: A. Gurevitch, Resident Inspector
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending May 13, 2022

Staff Activity: M. Bradisse and C. Berg augmented resident inspector coverage remotely.

Special Tooling: Early last week, CNS discovered that multiple copies of a certain cart (i.e., a piece of special tooling with credited safety features) included incorrect fasteners in the design load path (see 5/6/22 report). After tagging out these carts, CNS replaced all fasteners on several carts that did not meet the design definition and returned them to service.

Special Tooling and Operations: Last week, NPO transmitted a safety evaluation report (SER) to CNS approving the continued use of an enhanced transportation cart (ETC-II) that is beyond its in-service inspection (ISI) date and associated grace period. Of note, the nuclear explosive unit within this ETC-II has been staged there for over a year; work had previously been paused due to an issue with a component, which has not yet been dispositioned. This configuration also includes two other pieces of special tooling—attached to the unit—that are well past their respective ISI dates (see 7/9/21 report). The SER noted that the current configuration of the unit, tools, and ETC-II—which has been staged in a climate-controlled facility—provides adequate assurance of safety; however, the SER does not authorize use of the expired tools to eventually remove the unit from inside the ETC-II. The SER also does not approve indefinite staging of this unit. Last week, it was discovered that this ETC-II had been moved from one facility to another several weeks ago, despite the container being outside its ISI grace period date. CNS convened an investigation and critique to determine how the move was approved and conducted, in order to prevent similar events from recurring. Participants noted that the CNS processes did not adequately restrict the movement from occurring and recorded this as a gap.

Grassland Fire: On Monday, the Operations Center (OC) notified all plant personnel that the National Weather Service had issued a red flag warning for high fire risk in the Texas Panhandle region. Later that day, a grass fire in a buffer zone on Pantex property was reported to the OC by a CNS employee in a nearby facility. The fire was several miles away from any nuclear or nuclear explosive facilities. The Pantex fire department expediently responded to the scene and determined that with 40 mph winds, the fire could potentially threaten plant facilities. The Pantex fire department then put out a request for mutual aid from the cities of Panhandle, Claude, and Potter County, they responded and combined to attack the fire from multiple flanks. The fire burned approximately 80 acres before being controlled and extinguished in less than 2 hours. Fire department personnel monitored the area to make sure the fire would not reignite, and plant personnel were allowed to return to their areas. No one was injured, and no Pantex buildings or structures were damaged. A preliminary examination by firefighters onsite noted multiple fire initiation sites intersecting a nearby road, that were consistent with fire initiation due to sparks from dragging trailer chains. The area that burned is managed under a vegetation control plan to minimize available fuel, which provides for a significant fire break protecting site facilities and employees. The event will be reported in the DOE Occurrence Reporting and Processing System as a wildland fire outside of a DOE facility that had the potential to threaten the facility.