

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 27, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR: J. K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: H. Waugh and W. White, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending October 27, 2000

DNFSB Activity Summary: H. Waugh was on site all week. W. White was on site Tuesday through Friday.

W88 New Authorization Basis Implementation: The Department of Energy has decided to delay the Milestone III meeting for the W88. The meeting, previously scheduled for November 2, will be rescheduled after more information is available on the capabilities and sensitivity of the ultraviolet detector system. This information will be based on ongoing testing of the detectors by the vendor and will require analysis by MHC.^[II.A]

Lightning Protection Controls for the W87 Program: On October 20, the Department of Energy directed MHC to take all prudent actions to mitigate the operational impacts on the W87 program as a result of lightning warnings. In return, the Department of Energy agreed to accept a delay in the ongoing efforts by MHC to upgrade the site-wide authorization basis through the Bays BIO module. Removing all lightning controls would increase operational efficiency by ten percent, according to MHC estimates. To achieve increased efficiency, MHC suggested changes to eliminate operational restrictions on transportation, hoisting, and manifold operations during lightning warnings. In some cases, these changes will result in little or no increased risk during W87 operations. In other cases, incorporating these changes will require relying on weapon components for safety or relying on a credited control for the electrical path off the weapon. Either change reduces the defense-in-depth that previously existed. In addition, the changes will create a set of administrative controls for W87 operations that is significantly different from controls for other programs, possibly creating confusion among MHC production personnel. There are currently no plans to bypass the normal change control processes when implementing the control changes. It is not clear whether a decision to credit the safety function of weapon components will result in a DOE or national laboratory review of the surveillance program for those components to ensure that the safety function remains viable over the lifetime of the weapon.^[II.A]

Weight and Leak Check System in 12-116: The contractor readiness assessment for the robotic weight and leak check system in Building 12-116 ended this week. The readiness assessment team identified ten pre-start findings and eight post-start findings. Among the pre-start findings was the failure to validate closure of issues raised during an earlier Department of Energy readiness assessment which had concluded the system was not ready to start up. The Department of Energy has not yet scheduled its readiness assessment.^[II.A]

Pit Repackaging: Earlier this week, MHC repackaged its 100th pit for the month of October. This is a significant improvement over recent months, and October may end as the most productive month to date. However, this is well short of the 200 pit per month commitment made by the Secretary of Energy in the Implementation Plan for Recommendation 99-1. As this repackaging rate was accomplished with only two shifts (rather than the two-line, two-shift commitment needed to repackage 200 pits per month), it appears to be a clear indication that 200 pits per month could be accomplished given an adequate commitment of personnel and resources by the Department of Energy.^[II.A]