

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 28, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: G.W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: T. Dwyer and H. Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending November 28, 1997

DNFSB Activity Summary: Harry Waugh was on site Monday through Wednesday. Timothy Dwyer was on site Tuesday and Wednesday.

Dynamic Balancer: The AAO Manager authorized M&H restart of the Dynamic Balancer on Monday. The M&H plan to close the Independent Review Team (IRT) and Verification Team post-start findings was accepted by AAO, with specific changes as directed in the restart authorization letter. Of note, restart was authorized with the existing W87 POI fixture, and M&H has not yet begun the procurement process for the new W87 POI fixture. [All 3 design agencies concurred in the decision to use the existing fixture on an interim basis.] M&H also initiated efforts to run W88 units through the Dynamic Balancer -- however, upon examination, the W88 POI fixture was found to have "as found" deficiencies at least as bad as the W87. LLNL, in particular, reportedly is opposed to balancing any WR units in the existing W88 POI fixture.

M&H efforts to operate the Dynamic Balancer once restart was authorized have not yet been successful, due in part to further errors in the Dynamic Balancer NEOP. Procedural inaccuracies also prevented completion of (related) unit weighing operations. Late Wednesday, additional problems arose involving the overvoltage (overspeed) trip that was the subject of a prestart finding. Actuation of this trip was precluding the Dynamic Balancer from reaching normal operating speed. M&H is currently investigating the cause of this anomaly.

Pit Storage -- AL-R8 Insert: Development of a sealed insert for the AL-R8 is still being pursued by LLNL, SNL, and M&H. It is now reported that all three designs have survived the 20 and 4 foot drop tests and then passed the required post-drop leak check. Essentially, the M&H and LLNL designs are variations of the same configuration -- the M&H insert is stainless steel, while the LLNL insert is aluminum. The M&H design has better thermal (sink) characteristics, while the LLNL may have an economic advantage. The SNL design continues to evolve -- latest reports indicate it is now configured very similar to the M&H design, but using a solder seal (heat-tape initiated) instead of flange bolts. DOE-AL has deferred the design selection decision at least 2 months, pending finalization of the SNL design and validation of the LLNL cost data.

Personnel Issues: A Recommended Decision and Order has been handed down in the Department of Labor Case involving 6 M&H employees [complainants] and M&H [respondent] over alleged retaliation for voicing safety concerns in the course of the W55 Weapon Dismantlement Program. No recovery or remedial action has been recommended against M&H.

W79 Program: DOE-AL presented a new accelerated schedule for the W79 Dismantlement Program on Monday. This schedule shows SIID review concurrent with the dissolution of Type 6B unit #2, and prior to the 5 week NESS study. Given the potential for significant process changes arising out of this second Type 6B run, especially in light of the number of changes generated by the first Type 6B run, this schedule entails significant programmatic risk. Per this accelerated schedule, first dismantled unit (FDU) occurs March 16th.

Attachment

Upcoming Pantex Events:

December 2 -- General Zettler visit

December 2 -- W87 ASSET Program Team Meeting**

December 3 -- W69 Hemisphere/Detonator disposition begins (Zone 11)

December 9-11 -- DNFSB Site Visit**

December 10 -- Pit Thermal Meeting

December 19 -- W79 SIID delivery [target date]**

December 22 -- W79 Type 6B (unit #2) Dissolution [target date]**

[unknown] -- NES Electrical Tester Master Study completion

January 5-16 -- W56 SIRR

January 31 -- W56 SIID issued

January 20 -- W79 NESS starts**

March 16 -- W79 FDU**

NOTES: ** highlights events which are new listings or for which schedule has changed