

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 19, 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 December 19, 1997

DNFSB Activity Summary: Harry Waugh was on site all week. Timothy Dwyer was on site Monday through Thursday.

Nuclear Explosive Safety Evaluation (NESE): The 1st NESE was convened this week to review the proposed use of the new PT4172 and existing PT4030 electrical testers to perform tests previously approved (by NES Study) on the B83 using the PT4058. Based on the technical information presented, no safety issues associated with the proposed change were raised. However, the NESE report recommends that the PT4172 be added to the Master Tester List (MTL), and this use of the NESE forum raises procedural questions. DOE Order 452.2A specifies in ¶4.d.(8)(b) that the “process used to evaluate and approve any... electrical equipment intended for use within an NEA shall be evaluated in a NES Study.” The NESE Chairman concluded that the NES tester master study, under which Pantex is operating in proposing this tester change, satisfies this requirement. ¶4.c.(3)(b) authorizes Operations Offices to “specify the process for performing... [a change control] NES evaluation.” By memorandum dated October 27th, 1997, DOE-AL promulgated the definition and criteria for conducting a NESE, and issued changes to several sections of DOE-AL Supplemental Directive (SD) 5610.11A to implement NESEs. However, ¶8.b.(2) was not changed: “Testers proposed for inclusion on the MTL shall be evaluated as part of the nuclear explosive hazard assessment..., evaluated in a NES Study, and included on the list only after the safety study is approved.” [emphasis added] The NESE Chairman recognized that using the NESE process to place the new PT4172 Tester on the MTL violates this requirement, but noted that the approval authority for the NESE memo, NESE report and DOE-AL SD requirement is the same -- DOE-AL. Therefore, the NESE Chairman intends to highlight this inconsistency to DOE-AL in the report cover letter, but state that all NESE members agreed that the NESE forum was acceptable. The fact remains that, under this scenario, the PT4172 will be added to the MTL under the authority of DOE-AL, as opposed to the authority of DP-20 (NES Study approval authority). Of note, the DOE-AL SD in question is currently undergoing revision. Draft DOE-AL SD 452.2 (supersedes DOE-AL SD 5610.11A), as well as DOE-AL SD 452.1 (supersedes DOE-AL SD 5610.10A), were obtained and distributed to the staff for review. Formal comments are due to DOE-AL by January 2nd.

W79 Dismantlement Program: The W79 Bay SIRR for WR was conducted last week. Initial reports indicate that there were approximately fifteen prestart findings, eight of which are related to the Close Capture [Ventilation] System. Five post-start findings and ten observations were also recorded. The Project Team does not anticipate serious difficulties in rectifying any of the findings. Of greater concern was this week's delivery of the Nuclear Explosive Hazards Assessment (NEHA). The W79 Project Team has rejected the initial draft of the NEHA as inadequate. The bulk of this week was spent in conference between the Project Team and the Hazards Assessment Task Team (HATT) developing a corrective action plan that will not result in further slippage of the W79 NESS or FDU dates.

Neutron Radiography Facility RA: The Neutron Radiography Facility (Building 12-56) RA was initiated this week. Several prestart findings have been reported to date, but have been characterized as relatively simple to correct (e.g., update MSDS binders, properly mount a portable fire extinguisher, etc.).

BIO Upgrade Projects: DP-3 (Stello) convened a review of plans for and status of the Pantex BIO Upgrade Program, including the Transportation, Nuclear Explosive Fire Protection, and Lightning Protection projects, in Albuquerque Tuesday/Wednesday. Board staff members attended and will file a separate report.

Attachment

Upcoming Pantex Events:

December 22 -- W79 SIID delivery [target date]

December 23-29 -- W79 Cell SIRR

January 5-6 -- W79 Type 6B (unit #2) Dissolution [target date]

January 13 -- Quarterly NMO Program Meeting

January 14 -- Quarterly Production Meeting

January 23-25 -- W56 SIRR

February 9 -- W56 SIID complete

February 3 -- W79 NESS starts**

February 24-March 6 -- B61-11 NESE**

March 9-27-- NES Electrical Tester Master Study completion**

March 16 -- W79 FDU

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