

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

May 2, 1997

TO: G. W. Cunningham, Technical Director
FROM: Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh, Pantex Site Representatives
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Activity Report for Week Ending May 2, 1997.

1. DNFSB Activity Summary:

Both Jim McConnell and Harry Waugh were on site all week. The majority of effort this week was dedicated to continuing Tim Dwyer's orientation to be the next Pantex Site Representative. The Site Representatives and Mr. Dwyer toured the major facilities at Pantex of concern to the Board and continued to introduce Mr. Dwyer to personnel from the DOE Area Office and Mason and Hanger. Friday marked Jim McConnell's last day as a Pantex Site Representative. Tim Dwyer will start his duties at Pantex officially on June 2, 1997.

2. Issue Follow-Up:

a. Material Handling, Transportation, and Storage: For the second week in a row, Mason and Hanger (M&H) failed to control the evolution to transfer a nuclear explosive facility to repair mode for construction work and then transfer the facility back to operations. In a disturbingly similar repeat of last week's problem, M&H transferred a facility (Building 12-44 Cell 6) to repair mode and deposited the Radioactive Material Area (RMA) to support a sub-contractor construction project. When the project was completed, M&H returned the cell to maintenance mode but failed to re-establish the RMA and the associated controls. Subsequently, the M&H Nuclear Material Control Center (NMCC) authorized transferring two nuclear explosives into the cell without checking to see if the facility was authorized to receive and store radioactive material. Because the units (W88s) were contained and there was no potential for the spread of contamination, DOE-AAO and M&H determined that the event was not significant enough to warrant reporting under the occurrence reporting process. However, this event was almost a repeat of the event described in last week's Pantex Weekly Letter. The Site Representatives believe this event indicates a failure of the previous corrective actions and provides even more evidence that there are obvious weaknesses in the NMCC process for tracking movements.

b. B61-5 Dismantlement: Last week, the Pantex Site Representatives reported the details of a test cable problem on the B61 Mod 5 dismantlement program. The Design Agency (SNL/NM) authorized a temporary fix for the cable which was completed this week. Using the modified tester cable, M&H successfully tested and then disassembled fifteen B61-5 weapons this week.

3. Additional Information:

a. Selection of New Assistant Area Office Manager for Weapon Operations: On Friday, the Secretary of Energy approved the exemption required to hire a new Amarillo Area Office Assistant Manager for Weapon Operations (AAMWP) from outside DOE. With the exemption, DOE will now be able to formally hire Darryl Schmidt, the former LANL representative to the Pantex Tri-Lab Office, as the AAMWP.

4. Future Activities:

- a. May 15-21 - W79 DMSO Check Out
- b. May 27 - M&H AT-400A Corporate ORR begins (estimate)
- c. May 27-June 9 - W87 WPRR

d. May 30-June 5 - W79 Type 6B DMSO WPRR

e. June ? - DOE AT-400A ORR (following conclusion of M&H ORR)

f. June 10 - B61-7 NESS Revalidation begins

g. June 23 - W79 Type 6B DMSO Readiness Assesment begins

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Board Members