

Pantex INFO

Stockpile Stewardship

In 1993, the President of the United States and the Congress directed that a science-based Stockpile Stewardship Program be developed to maintain the United States' stockpile of nuclear weapons without nuclear testing. The DOE/NNSA is committed to the Stockpile Stewardship program as its means for ensuring the nation has a safe and reliable nuclear weapons deterrent.

B&W Pantex plays a key role in the Stockpile Stewardship initiative because of its mission to evaluate nuclear weapons in the stockpile.

Weapons Evaluation

To maintain the reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons, a certain number of randomly selected weapons from all active systems are annually removed from the stockpile and returned to Pantex.

The weapons are disassembled, tested and evaluated to ensure the operability of the weapons components. Most testing is done onsite, but tests associated with component aging are performed at other laboratories and production agencies. Some weapons are configured as Joint Test Assemblies and provided to the military for flight-testing. Main charge high explosive components and special nuclear material are removed from weapons before this testing.

Technicians take extreme care during the evaluation process to maintain the configuration of the weapon and its components as it is received. The testing data is gathered and reported to experts at the national laboratories. After testing, some weapons are reassembled and returned to the military, while others are completely dismantled and disposed.

Components not destroyed during the testing process can be recycled and made available for use in other weapon system assemblies.

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