

Pantex NEWS

MAINTAINING THE SAFETY, SECURITY AND RELIABILITY OF AMERICA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS STOCKPILE

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Pantex Green Effort Earns Gold *DOE honors plant for "greening" firing range*

The Department of Energy (DOE) this week honored Pantex with a Sustainability Award for an initiative to make its firing range more earth friendly. This is the second year in a row the plant has received the award.

DOE created the Sustainability Awards in 2011 to recognize sites that work to save taxpayer money by improving energy, water and fleet efficiency, as well as reducing pollution and waste across the department's facilities. This year, DOE singled out Pantex for a program that reduced potential lead contamination at the plant's firing range, where Security Police Officers (SPO) fire thousands of rounds a year training to secure the nuclear weapons facility.

"Pantex is firmly committed to protecting the environment in everything we do. It is an honor to be recognized by DOE for that commitment," said B&W Pantex General Manager John Woolery.

The indoor firing range was annually generating approximately 2,400 pounds of lead-contaminated waste through the use of lead bullets. Although much of the lead was recycled, about 1,100 pound of lead-contaminated filters and sludge were not recyclable and had to be disposed of as hazardous waste. Additionally, lead dust released when the bullets struck targets created an airborne hazard for the SPOs.

To correct the issue, Pantex switched to a new bullet trap, abated lead in the range building and changed over to non-lead ammunition. The indoor rounds, which are generally made from compressed copper or zinc, are frangible, meaning they break into pieces upon impact and don't create an airborne dust hazard like a conventional lead bullet.

The amount of lead waste generated by the indoor range was dwarfed by the lead generated at the outdoor ranges. Outdoor ranges at Pantex are backed by earthen berms that are covered by a layer of dolomite, a mineral that is used to trap bullets that pass through targets and strike the berms. When the dolomite layer becomes packed with lead over many years of use, it creates a ricochet hazard and must be replaced.

Normally, the nearly 1,500 tons of lead-saturated dolomite would have been sent to a hazardous waste landfill, but the team decided it would be much more environmentally sound if only the lead was sent to the landfill. The team found a contractor that could sift out the lead from the dolomite, and the recovered dolomite was reused to cover the berms.

The logo for Pantex NEWS. The word "Pantex" is written in a large, bold, red, italicized sans-serif font. A white orbital ring with a small grey sphere at its center orbits the letter "P". The word "NEWS" is written in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font to the right of "Pantex".

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As a result, only 24 tons of lead contaminated waste was generated and disposed, and 1,440 tons of dolomite was diverted from the landfill and beneficially reused. Although the environmental aspect of the project was the main attraction, the recycling effort also saved money, reducing the shipping and disposal costs by more than \$400,000.

B&W Pantex manages and operates the Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas, for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration. B&W Pantex is also the proud recipient of the DOE's Voluntary Protection Program STAR status for safety excellence. The company was also named one of America's safest companies by Occupational Hazards magazine and has received numerous awards from the National Safety Council.