

# PANTEXAN

SPRING 2026

## EVERYDAY INNOVATION

*Extraordinary people  
delivering extraordinary results*



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AMARILLO, TEXAS

# PANTEX PLANT

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**LETTER  
FROM  
LEADERSHIP**

At Pantex, delivering the mission is our goal and is ultimately how we measure success. In order to achieve that end goal, we must ensure a strong and solid foundation, which starts with our people. We have extraordinary people delivering extraordinary results and it is noticeable across the Nuclear Security Enterprise.

Accordingly, we have taken action and are making improvements based on your feedback. I hope you are seeing the results across the site and in your daily life at Pantex. We created a plan for improvements within our Pantex Strategic Agenda, and I encourage you to go read it. This plan includes the Quality of Life program, which encompasses things like the Fix It Now initiative to repair small issues quickly; the HVAC repair, which will make Pantex a cooler place to work in the hot summer; and the Clean Sweep, which is decluttering work spaces. Additionally, Project Refresh launched the initial Pantex Pantry with great success.

If you are interested in adding to your résumé, the Educational Assistance Program will help pay for continuing education related to your career. The Pantex Leadership Academy was created to help give a leg up to employees seeking the tools they need to become leaders. These programs are designed to support employee career advancement and address both current skill gaps and future organizational needs. We are hosting regular All-Hands meetings to ensure you hear directly from us, and we brought back the traditional turkeys and holiday gifts as a thank you to each and every one of our employees.

This stuff matters. Actions are the proof of concept, and this is what it means to be a Pantex citizen. We are taking care of our employees as we successfully deliver our mission with operational excellence for our families, our coworkers, our communities, and for our nation. We are making Pantex the premier place to be.

You are the ones who are driving Pantex's success, and because of your efforts we have a significant seat at the table across the Nuclear Security Enterprise. As we move through 2026, I encourage you to stay focused on our key objectives. Let us put those points on the board and show them what it means to be a Pantexan, not just delivering the mission but also doing so with excellence and creating a premier work environment while we're at it.



Kelly Beierschmitt  
President and General Manager

**LEADERSHIP**

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## DOSIMETRY READERS

Dosimetry reader project achieves major milestone and brings autonomy closer.

By Hali Rowland

Pantex is one step closer to establishing a standalone dosimetry program thanks to the recent installation of processing equipment and modifications to the on-site laboratory. This means in the future Radiation Safety will have the ability to process dosimeters on-site instead of mailing them off-site for processing.

Dosimeters are worn to capture individual exposure to radiation at work. Roughly 4,000 Pantexans must be monitored for radiation because they work in radiologically posted areas where the potential to receive doses of 100 millirem in a year exists. Dosimeters are exchanged and sent off-site for processing quarterly.

“Pantex will benefit from having an on-site dosimetry reader program by being able to provide employee dose information via the online Dose Records Information System (DRIS) approximately two to three weeks after exchange,” Health Physics Manager Stacy Randel said. “Currently, employee dosimeter dose information is available on DRIS approximately six to eight weeks after the quarterly exchange.”

The dosimetry reader project is slated to be complete in November 2027. While that is still nearly two years away, a lot of work has to be done to meet this goal, including hiring additional personnel, creating software applications, developing procedures, and gaining equipment acceptance.

With construction and equipment installations finished, the next step is reapplying for external accreditation through the U.S. Department of Energy Laboratory Accreditation Program (DOELAP). DOELAP is an oversight committee ensuring consistency and compliance in labs across the DOE complex. Pantex will achieve reaccreditation through displaying competency of dosimetry through direct measurements, calibration intercomparisons, site assessments, and applied research.

“The Radiation Safety Department expects to begin DOELAP-required studies at the beginning of FY 2026 in order to apply for external DOELAP reaccreditation in late 2026 for a 2027-2030 accreditation,” Randel said.

Pantex has been DOELAP accredited in external dosimetry since 1998 and internal dosimetry since 1999; however, Pantex’s external dosimetry department has been accredited using Y-12 National Security Complex as the processor since 2020. After PanTeXas Deterrence was awarded the contract for

the management and operation of Pantex, a standalone dosimetry program capability was identified as a priority on the Pantex Strategic Agenda.

“Senior management has provided their full support and commitment to this project, giving us the help we need from the top,” Randel said. “The Dosimetry and Radiological Measurements Group [D&RMG] has been working toward fulfilling the Dosimeter Reader Program project for the past two years, and we have the support needed to finish strong.”

Randel recently received her DOELAP assessor certification, giving her greater insight into the DOE’s expectations for maintaining DOELAP accreditation at Pantex. She will help ensure compliance and conformance with performance standards in the program. Other health physicists are also working to become qualified assessors.

“The D&RMG staff recently completed a comprehensive training plan that included over 580 hours of health physics training from Oak Ridge Associated Universities and recognized experts in the field,” Radiation Safety Senior Manager Kyle Edwards said. “The training program was designed to prepare our staff for future projects just like this. Currently, the dosimetry staff is actively engaged in developing DOELAP-mandated studies, including K Factor determination, background assessment, fade analysis, and neutron correlation. These studies are critical for validating the RSD’s ability to accurately process and read dosimeters.”

External Dosimetry health physicists have conducted extensive research to supply the plant with the best dosimetry instrumentation for this project. The D&RMG team will undergo extensive training on the new equipment. Significant amounts of testing and studies will be completed before full processing capabilities are rolled out to the plant to ensure the best and most accurate dose readings.

“The complexity in developing a compliant dosimetry program required significant effort and coordination involving not only RSD personnel but also subject matter experts from Pantex Infrastructure, Production Projects, Construction Management, Project Management, Engineering, Facility Management, and Information Technology,” Edwards said. “Bringing this capability back to the site offers substantial long-term operational advantages.”

## GOOD CLEAN SAFETY

Ensuring safety at Pantex begins with the smallest of actions.

*By Hali Rowland*

Booker Cornish knows a mess when he sees one. He has diligently worked as a custodian for most of his life, most recently at Pantex for the past three years. That's why when he saw crowded traffic in a busy parking lot, he took it upon himself to clean it up. Cornish guided multiple vehicles backing out of their parking spaces safely before watching traffic and giving directions to ensure there was not an incident.

"We've been trained to help people back up, so I take it upon myself to have the initiative when I see someone backing. I'm more apt to go without being asked or told to render that type of service," Cornish said. "People thank me for it, but I just enjoy helping because I enjoy what I do here, because it involves safety."

Cornish started his life of service and helping others at a young age. When he was 14, he joined the Neighborhood Youth Cooperation, a program where students worked summer and after-school jobs to stay busy. He was assigned work at Summit Elementary school near Amarillo Boulevard. Through the program, he helped school custodians take care of the grounds for nine hours a day, five days a week in the summer. The school has since closed, but the impact of the experience still sweeps Cornish away.

"That's where I came in contact with janitorial staff, and just cleaning and so forth kept me out of trouble, gave me something to do," Cornish said. "I had responsibilities to take care of — my chores. When I look back, I appreciate the opportunity that Mr. Champion, the principal, gave me. I made him proud that he could trust me. I was trustworthy, and I made my mother proud. It made a helper out of me."

Booker makes sure the floors never lose their shine, because he sees the quality of his work as a reflection of not only what he does but also of the positive glow he has inside. This is evidenced by an email he received from a supervisor that was so special to Booker he had it made into a plaque. It reads in part, "Booker, your work ethic states volumes about you," Maintenance Custodial Supervisor Trudy Romo said. "You persevere and have never complained — not one time. I personally wanted to state how much I appreciate you! Thank you, Booker, for always being kind, nice, and very dependable."

In addition to his normal job duties including cleaning, sanitizing, and the upkeep of several buildings, Cornish goes out of his way to assist others when he can. On site, spotters are required when backing up

any government-owned vehicle. Typically, coworkers help each other with this duty, but since Cornish works in many areas of the plant, he says everyone is his coworker, and he's happy to pitch in.

"I enjoy the good friendliness and hospitality of my coworkers, because everyone is considered a coworker regardless of what department you're in," Cornish said. "Helping people back up is a courtesy. People here are courteous and stop and talk and give feedback. I just enjoy that courtesy."

Backup cameras have significantly increased safety by providing a wider and clearer view of the area behind vehicles, but there are still blind spots, areas of limited view, or the potential for a vehicle to suddenly appear.

"I grew up in the '70s and '80s, where we were told to put your arm across the seat and look back," Cornish said. "Now, we trust the mirrors and cameras and, sometimes, have someone in your rearview mirror standing behind you helping to guide you out. That's where your safety comes in, because you never know what someone else might be thinking or if something is coming around a curve while you're backing out."

Cornish received recognition for taking control and responding to the potentially hazardous situation in the busy parking lot. Pantex puts a spotlight on employees helping to ensure safety is at the forefront of everything done at the plant so that Pantexans can go home the same way they showed up to work. This small act impacted numerous people driving in the parking lot that day, but it was just part of the job for Cornish.

"I just did my job. I believe in treating people with courtesy, dignity, and respect," Cornish said. "I enjoy my responsibility here at Pantex. Keeps me humble."



## CALLING PANTEX HOME

Rita Baker lived at the Pantex Village and was the backbone for generations of Pantexans.

By Candice Copelin

*Editor's Note: Rita Baker, 95, passed away peacefully on September 28, 2025. This article was in the final stages of completion, and we share it with readers to recognize and honor her history and her contribution to Pantex.*

The urgent demands of World War II brought the Pantex Ordnance Plant to the Texas Panhandle, which in September 1942 launched its mission of building munitions. To address its worker housing shortage, Pantex Village opened in 1943 and would eventually be home to thousands of people. With the promise of better pay and a chance to contribute to the war effort once more, World War I veteran John Hedrick got a job in explosives at Pantex and moved his family from their farm in Clarendon to the Pantex Village.

Moving with John and his wife, Lois, were their boys, Glenn and Wayne, and daughter, Rita. Glenn joined his father at Pantex as a forklift driver, while Rita and Wayne were bussed every day to the only public high school in the area, Amarillo High. The busses came through Pantex Village all hours of the day, each one transporting a shift of Pantexans for duty or providing transportation to Amarillo or nearby towns for school or recreational purposes.



While her brother and father worked at Pantex to support the war effort, Rita and the other kids in Pantex Village were learning the jitterbug and playing the domino game 42.

“We danced a lot,” Rita remembered. “It was a lot of fun, especially when we moved up here from Clarendon, which was a farming town. When we got up here, there were a lot of things to do. They sponsored a teenage party every Friday night. We would drink Cokes, and our moms and dads had to chaperone every once in a while.”

The Village was isolated 10 miles from the nearest town and thus became a self-sufficient community with a gathering center, recreational facilities, gas station, grocery store, soda fountain, restaurant, and eventually a movie theater. Card games, dancing, baseball, and especially basketball was played in abundance just a few miles from “the bomb plant,” though Rita noted that Pantex was just the “soap factory” to her back then. There were people everywhere, explosives were tested at all hours of the day, and the busses were always running to transport people around. It was normal for the Hedricks family. They thought nothing about their small two-bedroom home or the lack of resources — they were just happy to have a place they could live safely.

Rations for many everyday items were in place nationwide, and Rita remembered having stamps for shoes, tires, and many other items they needed to get by at that time. She knew the war was serious and did her best to make things easier for her parents by being a good kid.

As the secretary of the Jive Juniors youth group, Rita was a part of every dance. She invited area kids from outside the Pantex Village and even her basketball teammates from Amarillo High. They had a local band that frequently played western music at their dances.

“We always had something going,” Rita said.

Then, just like that, the community came to a halt.

“The day that the war ended, we were playing baseball and they made us come in and we had to sit down and listen to the reports,” Rita said. “Victory in Europe Day. I didn’t have a car so I couldn’t drive myself to celebrate, so I gathered with some people and we celebrated there. You wouldn’t believe how many people left that next day! They were going back to what they did before Pantex, and there were some that tried something new.”

While the Pantex Village saw changes after the war, it would continue to house people until 1968. John Hedrick stayed in his position a short time after the end of the war, and then after three years of living in Pantex Village the family packed up and looked for a new place to call home.

“We got in the car and drove to Denver and California to visit family,” Rita said. “There was nowhere to live out there, so we came back to Amarillo.”

Rita Baker sits with her son, Kelly, and grandson, Adam, at the former Pantex Village site. Kelly is holding an old basketball hoop left at the site.



Not long after they returned, big brother Glenn introduced his little sister to her future husband, Floy Baker. Floy had met Glenn at Pantex, where he was too young to work in the plant, so he retrieved the mail from Amarillo and delivered it daily.

Floy and Rita were married in 1947. Pantex reopened in 1951, and Floy started his role in heat treatment in 1958. Floy was not the only Baker cooking up something at Pantex. On the assembly line was his sister Zola and her husband, Frank, along with many cousins sprinkled throughout the plant.

“Floy was always tinkering in the barn,” Rita said. “He could fix stuff ... I never really knew what he was doing, but he invented things out at Pantex. He got an award for it.”

The Bakers took their wedding vows seriously, caring for each other in all seasons of life — in sickness and in health. Rita made Floy a hearty breakfast of oatmeal, bacon, and eggs every morning and took care of him after numerous surgeries.

“He went to North Carolina to receive an award for an invention he developed at Pantex,” Rita said. “I took him to the airport that morning and he flew to North Carolina, then he flew back that afternoon and

we flew to Houston so he could have surgery. The award was important to him.”

Pantex has clearly been an important thread in the Baker family. In 1986 their son, Kerry, took up his post in Safeguards and Security. Following Kerry would be his son, Adam, who is currently a Pantex photographer. Four generations of Pantexans, all championed by one person: Rita Baker.

When Rita reflected back on her time at Pantex Village and the four generations of men in her life serving the mission, her feelings ran deep.

“My dad was really patriotic,” she said. “My whole family was. I think it’s great — I’m proud of it.”

The Pantexan spirit can shine through even those who have never clocked in at the plant via the people who love and support employees. The Pantex Village may be gone, but the mission continues and Rita’s family legacy lives on in the dedicated Pantexans still carrying out the mission with pride.



If you'd like to  
#JointheMission, learn more  
at [pantex.energy.gov/careers](https://pantex.energy.gov/careers).



## WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Pantex works to find and retain the best of the best employees.

*By Mel Gardner*

Pantex is faced with a constant challenge: cultivating and retaining the specialized talent essential to our mission. This often-overlooked endeavor is vital to Pantex's enduring success to complete the important work it performs.

Of course, Pantex's recruiting efforts do not just start when a hopeful first timer begins looking for a job. Getting Pantex's name and career opportunities out there starts with helping grade-school students develop an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Educational outreach events such as the annual Pantex Regional Science Bowl, Pantex C.R.E.A.T.E. (Cultivating Research, Engineering, Analytics, Technology, and Exploration), and partnerships with the Amarillo College Kid's College and AmTech Career Academy introduce students to the many opportunities they can seek in the future at the site.

"Introducing local students to the job opportunities at Pantex shows them that meaningful high-impact careers exist right in their own community, where their skills, education, and dedication can lead them to a rewarding career," said Darla Fish, Pantex community and education outreach coordinator.

College, military, and traditional career fair recruiting is a major effort for the Pantex Human Resources Talent Acquisition team. With competition for talent increasing, the team recently rebranded materials and processes to attract job seekers to Pantex.

With the tagline "Join the Mission," Talent Acquisition prepared and executed a new career fair strategy with a focus on schools that match needed skills and research interests in addition to locations where recruiters have had success before. Last fall, recruiters attended 18 college and university career fairs, with more planned in early 2026. They also attended 23 career fairs at military bases and schools, making contacts with high-level officers and testing candidates on the road. Pantex's consistent effort to hire veterans was recently recognized with a U.S. Department of Labor's 2025 HIRE Vets Gold Medallion Award.

"We're proud of our brand and the opportunity we provide for individuals to contribute and 'join the mission,'" said Patti Knipp, Talent Acquisition senior manager. "The work we do is unique and interesting, so it should stand out in a crowd."

While Pantex's mission is clear and simple, how Pantex accomplishes the mission can be trickier to explain to

a job seeker; that's why internships offer students a chance to dip their toes into this unique work.

Last summer, Pantex welcomed 35 students from 18 colleges for a 10-week internship. Octavio Almanza graduated from Texas A&M University and interned in Summer 2024. That October, he went from intern to employee.

"My internship experience helped me develop a keen eye for small details and also exposed me to the collaboration process between cross-functional teams," Almanza said. "I find myself using these skills for my current position on a daily basis."

With programs such as the annual Pantex Innovation Challenge or the launch of the new Palo Duro Research Facility on the West Texas A&M University campus, Pantex maintains strong academic partnerships with institutions such as Amarillo College, Texas A&M University System, and Texas Tech University to create talent tracks that connect Pantex with well-prepared young adults.

Equally as important is retaining a hard-won workforce. The average length of service in Fiscal Year 2025 is 10 years with a reported 5.1% attrition rate. While these numbers are a sign of a content workforce, Pantex continually works to ensure benefits offered to employees keep engagement strong.

Pantex offers educational assistance to help employees pursue continuing education for professional knowledge and upward movement. Other in-house trainings seek to help Pantexans increase their potential, such as the Pantex Leadership Academy and Mentorship Program. Regular employee tours are offered via The Zone and give people an opportunity to learn about other areas of the site.

Human Resources Talent Management also offers monthly workshops on topics that help future leaders prepare and improve their professional IQ. Employee resources groups help connect employees to networking and support across the site. Regular employee tours teach employees about areas of the mission they might not otherwise see.

"Offering employees a place they can thrive matters," Chief Human Resources Officer Amy Collie said. "We want to hire talented individuals with a passion for the mission and ensure they are incentivized to stay and contribute to the mission. We accomplish more together."



## W88 ALT 370 LPU

Pantex completes the last production unit for the W88 Alt 370.

*By David Lewis*

In 1988, the W88 nuclear warhead began its service as a crucial part of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. The warhead is deployed on the U.S. Navy's Trident II D5 Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile System carried aboard Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines. Now, over 35 years later, Pantex has completed the last production unit (LPU) for the latest alteration of the weapon.

“Accomplishing LPU for the W88 is a significant achievement that underscores the enduring viability and reliability of the nation’s strategic deterrent,” W88 Program Manager Crystal Hadley said. “This accomplishment demonstrates advanced engineering capabilities, rigorous safety protocols, and the successful collaboration of the entire nuclear complex.”

The W88 Alt 370 LPU was completed on November 19, 2025, further prolonging the lifespan of the W88. This achievement was 13 years in the making. Development phase work began in 2012, and in July 2021 the first production unit was completed. The update replaces the warhead’s arming, fusing, and firing subsystem, a refresh of the conventional high explosive within the weapon, with safety features such as a lightning arrestor connector.

Now, four years and numerous builds later, the W88 Alt 370 LPU is complete. Achieving such a significant milestone not only demonstrates a job well done at Pantex but also signals to the rest of the world the effort and dedication put forth to declare preparedness.

Completing LPU was not accomplished without struggle. Despite years of development, research, and preparation, there were still several instances of trial and adversity.

“We encountered numerous challenges along the way,” Hadley said. “A few examples include a tight schedule for the navy deliveries, logistics challenges, and material shortages. These were overcome through a dedicated

approach to problem solving, leveraging the collective expertise of subject matter experts, engineers, and technicians across the enterprise. The entire team focused on continuous process improvements, and maintaining effective communication channels was instrumental in resolving issues and maintaining progress toward our production goals.”

When national security is on the line, failure simply is not an option. With team determination and the support of subject matter experts and individuals across the Nuclear Security Enterprise, the challenges were overcome and the LPU was completed. Pantex again proved its vital role in supporting the nation’s nuclear deterrent.

“Maintaining and modernizing the nuclear arsenal, including warheads like the W88, is essential to ensuring a credible and effective nuclear deterrent,” former W88 Program Manager Jose Mowad said. “The W88 Alt 370 signals an unwavering commitment by the United States to its national security mission and to global stability.”

Over the years, the W88 team has been through several iterations of dedicated production technicians, process engineers, program managers, and more. These devoted teams were often confronted with many challenges and trials, but the teams have met each one of them head on. So, what is an accomplishment without the team behind it?

“To the entire W88 program team: your dedication, expertise, and efforts have been truly exceptional,” Hadley said. “We have endured so many challenges as a group and overcome the setbacks as a team. The relationships that have been built within this team will carry on for a lifetime, and it is a privilege and honor to be a part of something so grand and rewarding knowing that we are at the heart of adding safety and security to our nation.”

With the finish line now in the rearview mirror, there is only one thing left to be said: Mission accomplished.

## EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Day in the Life videos offer a special window into Pantex's unique job offerings.

*By Amberly Winningham*

The tools used at Pantex are not always the run-of-the-mill items you find on the shelves of Home Depot and Lowe's. At a facility with a specialized mission, some of the specialized tools used have to be crafted on-site by experts.

Pantex tool makers operate, program, construct, and repair tools to ensure high accuracy and adherence to specifications. The Pantexans who work as tool makers plan and execute complex machining operations from sketches, drawings, and instructions. Additionally, they perform mathematical calculations, program multiple tooling centers, and adhere to safety and security protocols.

Chad Sivik has been a Pantex tool maker for four years, but his connection to the plant is much deeper.

"My road to Pantex is paved with family," Sivik said. "My uncle has worked here for 12 years and always encouraged me to apply. When I finally listened, it was an obvious next step in my career as a machinist."

Sivik previously worked in the oil field machining industry performing repair and research and development of drilling components. He also has experience in the aerospace prototype industry. His experience in these roles has helped his career thrive at Pantex, he said.

"Being a Pantexan has benefited my family and me in ways that would not be possible without this job," he said.

The role of a tool maker is a hard-to-fill job at Pantex. To be considered for the position, candidates must complete an 8,000-hour, Pantex-approved apprenticeship or trainee program which provides experience related to craft work or must have direct experience that relates to the role.

Enabling Support and Services Manager Scott Hetzler explained that one of the ways Pantex is working to

fill roles like this is through partnership with local educational centers such as Amarillo Independent School District's AmTech Career Academy and Amarillo College. One aspect of the partnership is sharing the "Day in the Life" video series with students, including the most recent video showcasing Sivik and his work as a tool maker (which is featured on the cover of this issue).

The video series began two years ago and highlights the many jobs available at Pantex. The videos are highlighted on Pantex's YouTube channel and social media sites, as well as being shared with local school districts, West Texas A&M University, and Amarillo College.

Among the diverse jobs highlighted in the program are production technician, radiation technician, security police officer, fire protection engineer, metrology technician, central alarm system operator, and electrical engineer. The videos are typically a few minutes long and feature a Pantexan who explains the job and its requirements. Each video offers a window into unique jobs that represent an opportunity for a great career while also serving the nation and its mission.

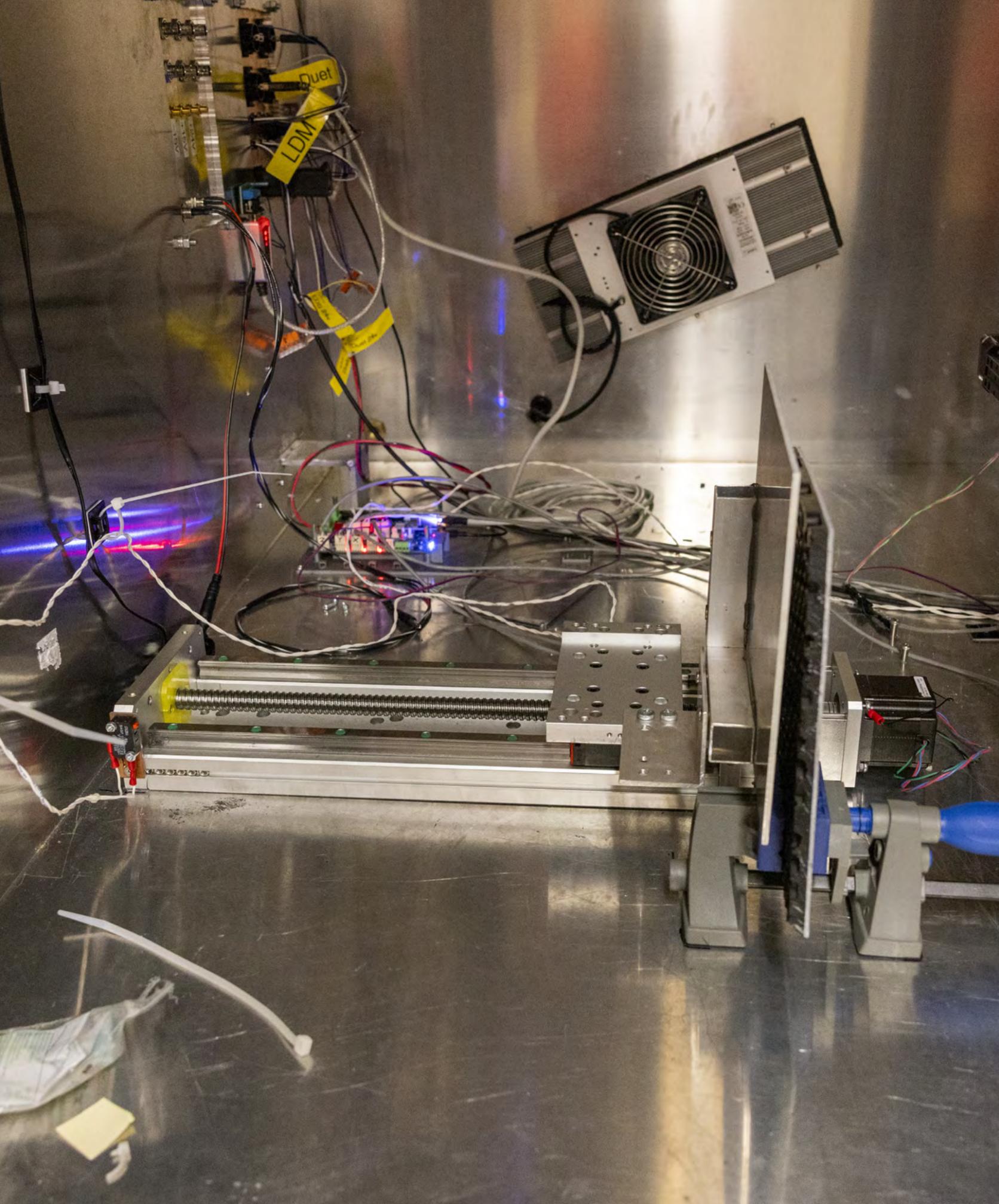
AmTech Career Academy plays the videos on a continuous loop in the school's lobby. Each student that passes the television is able to learn about opportunities for the future that are available to them.

"We love all of these videos. They are a great resource for us," said Jay Barrett, recently retired AmTech principal. "Our young professionals see more clearly the careers they can pursue at Pantex."

Human Resources at Pantex also uses these videos at career fairs. Prospective Pantexans are able to watch the videos on a monitor at the career fair booth and potentially join the efforts of Pantexans just like Sivik.

"Helping protect our country in my daily job is an important role that I'm proud to hold," Sivik said.





## SHOCKING ANSWERS

Pantex researchers testing plastics for improved deliverables.

By Bailie Myers

Electrostatic discharge (ESD) is a safety concern within the Nuclear Security Enterprise. An everyday ESD event — like a brief shock after walking on carpet and touching a metal doorknob — is no big deal; however, ESD within weapons processes could have serious repercussions. Researchers from the Electromagnetics team at Pantex are conducting a Plant-Directed Research and Development (PDRD) project to better understand ESD and increase production efficiency.

Dr. Ernesto Alva, a physicist on the Electromagnetics team within Facility Engineering, serves as project lead. His project, *Dielectric Surface Texture Influence on ESD Hazard*, involves research on plastic materials, which are commonly used in weapons processes, and their stored charge potential.

“Currently, all dielectric [plastic] materials utilized in weapon processes are characterized using highly conservative assumptions from the documented safety analysis,” said Dr. Alva. “There is some evidence that a material’s ability to deliver stored charge to a person or sensitive component is greatly affected by its surface texture, but a controlled experiment has never been conducted. If we can determine which materials pose an ESD hazard and which do not, we can disposition nonhazardous materials — improving efficiency.”

ESD could result in injury to a person, but it could also compromise a product — leading to both safety and quality concerns. Research findings would inform safety and quality controls, mitigate potential issues, and prevent work delays by providing concrete answers about the safety of materials used in production processes.

“Whenever there is an ESD issue, everything stops until the issue is addressed. Sometimes, this takes a lot of time from the research perspective,” said Dr. Alva. “If we can determine the relationship between surface texture and charge, we will minimize overcomplicated testing and controls. Ultimately, this will increase production and our deliverables.”

In order to achieve this goal, researchers are testing commonly-used plastic materials, such as polyethylene, polycarbonate, and Teflon, inside a humidity- and temperature-controlled ESD chamber. Once the plastic material is placed inside, a metal sharp-toothed comb is moved over its surface to create a corona charge. A metal probe is used at different locations around the material to create a discharge.

A digital oscilloscope measures the discharge current, and researchers are able to create a 3D representation of the charge distributions. That data will offer valuable insight into discharge patterns and how they vary depending on the texture of a material’s surface, providing knowledge that will reduce cumbersome controls and ensure the prevention of dangerous ESD events.

“It’s a safety issue,” said Dr. Alva. “The point is, we don’t want ESD to trigger an unwanted event. These experiments should provide the answers we need to better determine exactly which plastics are safe (from an ESD perspective) to use in weapons processes, which is a big deal since plastics are increasingly used in this work.”

Alva traveled to U.S. Department of Energy headquarters in January to discuss his project with federal production managers and other researchers. The gathering in Washington, D.C., allowed PDRD researchers to learn about similar projects at other sites and connect with those who may benefit from their research.

“Ernesto’s work being selected for presentation in D.C. is well-deserved recognition of his efforts at the enterprise level,” said Craig Noltensmeyer, manager of the Electromagnetics team. “By doing this investigation into how dielectrics behave in an ESD event, he is providing valuable data for the design agencies to inform how they characterize these materials in weapons processes.”

The team is exploring ways to expand on their research, including computer simulations to test various scenarios.

Researchers are currently in the experimental phase, gathering data which will later be compiled into detailed reports and used to answer essential questions about ESD — answers with the potential to boost efficiency and safeguard against dangerous ESD events.

“In Fiscal Year 2027, research findings will be compiled into a PDRD report and we will deliver an engineering evaluation that describes the relationship between surface texture and a material’s ability to deliver stored charge,” said Dr. Alva. “This research will give us a better understanding of the subject, making us more proficient and strategic in meeting our deliverables and fulfilling the mission.”

## BE PREPARED FOR SEVERE WEATHER

Severe weather season is unpredictable, scary, and can be dangerous. Whether on-site or off, it is important to know what to do if severe weather hits. Here are a few ways to prepare and keep yourself and your family safe:

- Verify you're signed up for P-Alerts in OneStop.
- Call 806-477-3000 for operational status before your shift.
- Make sure at least one family member knows first aid and CPR.
- Download the FEMA app for resources and safety and StrikeNet app for local weather.
- Have a family plan in place; all members of the family should review and practice the plan.
- Have key phone numbers (including family) memorized.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit and keep at least three days of food and water at home.
- Store important documents in a fire-proof safe.
- When reporting to work, only walk on cleared walkways. Report issues on the Industrial Safety webpage.

## INNOVATION CHALLENGE



Texas A&M Aggies versus Texas Tech Red Raiders is a match-up that has not happened since 2011 when the two football teams met for the final annual matchup before conference realignment – until now.

Students from the two universities met at Pantex on November 7 for a head-to-head championship round of the Pantex Innovation Challenge. These competitions task students with inventing solutions to real-world problems and issues encountered at Pantex. The RANK Shields team from Texas Tech took home the bragging rights of being named the Pantex Innovation Challenge Champion and \$10,000 to support continued learning and inventing.

The Pantex Innovation Challenge is one example of how Pantex invests in critical partnerships with higher education institutions and the future workforce.

“Students bring fresh perspectives, innovative approaches, and access to academic research, while Pantex offers real-world problem exposure, mentorship from experienced professionals, and career pathway development,” said Brenda Dillard, Pantex Partnerships and Technology Transfer program manager. “We treat every student interaction as developing a potential future employee or long-term collaborator.”

## VETERAN HIRING

Veterans make up 21% of the Pantex workforce. The site makes a concerted effort to attract this unique and valuable talent through targeted career fairs and with programs such as Veterans to Engineers and the U.S. Department of Defense SkillBridge internship, each attracting veterans who have retired or are near the end of their military service careers.

Recently, Pantex earned the 2025 HIRE Vets Gold Medallion Award for demonstrating patriotism and recognizing the value of veterans in the workplace. The Gold Award is the highest level of the U.S. Department of Labor's HIRE Vets Medallion Program and the only federal award recognizing exceptional achievement in veteran employment.

Earlier this year, Pantex also earned a spot in the Texas Workforce Commission and Texas Veterans Commission's “We Hire Vets” recognition program for initiatives focused on hiring our nation's heroes.

“Pantex offers me and other veteran servicemembers the opportunity to do what we are best at: serving and leading,” said Tyler White, Pantex general counsel and veteran. “Pantex provides an environment where we can use our skills and core values to further the mission and contribute to the security of our nation.”



## FOOD DRIVE

Pantex supported the High Plains Food Bank “Together We Can Food and Fund Drive” with a \$13,000 donation on December 3 to help provide 117,000 meals. Pantex was also named the Outstanding Corporate Volunteer Group with 509 volunteer hours served at the food bank this year. Pantexans are committed to supporting our community and making a difference through acts of service.

## GOLF LEAGUE

The Pantex Golf League is getting ready to tee it up for another season of friendly competition, and we want you to join in the fun! For more than 40 years, Pantexans, retirees, and family members have participated in the Pantex Golf League. League members compete in regular weekly play in addition to several special tournaments during the season. Visit The Zone for sign-up information.



## WINTER WONDERLAND

On December 12, Pantexans and their families flocked to Maxwell's Pumpkin Farm for the Winter Wonderland extravaganza. The sold-out event had approximately 1,800 attendees. It featured more than a million sparkling holiday lights and offered s'mores and hot cocoa, friendly animals at the petting zoo, a hay ride, and much more.

## EMPLOYEE DISCOUNTS

As a valued Pantexan, you have access to a wide range of benefits that extend beyond the workplace and into the local community. These perks are designed to save you money, enhance your well-being, and provide support in multiple areas of your life. This includes community discounts, wellness programs, and even online savings platforms that cater specifically to government employees and contractors. Visit the Employees page to ensure you're taking advantage of the valuable discounts offered!



## SPRING FORWARD

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 8. This means we need to remember to “spring forward” by moving our clocks ahead one hour before we go to bed Saturday night. The Pantex Fire Department reminds Pantexans that this is also a great time to change your smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector batteries to keep yourself and your family safe.

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## Check out this career highlight: Production Technician

### Qualifications:

- Verifiable mechanical experience
- Clean background
- Pass written test
- Pass physical examination
- Complete extensive training



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