

The logo for DOE NEWS. The letters 'DOE' are in a large, blue, serif font, with horizontal lines passing through them. To the right of 'DOE', the word 'NEWS' is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a background of horizontal blue lines.

DOE NEWS

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RADIOACTIVE SLUDGE CONTAINERIZED IN SECOND HANFORD BASIN

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has met a Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) cleanup milestone to complete bulk containerization of radioactive sludge in the K West Reactor Spent Nuclear Fuel Basin, located about 400 yards from the Columbia River at the Hanford Site in Washington State.

The milestone called for DOE to put into containers the bulk of the estimated 10 cubic yards (8 cubic meters) of sludge in the reactor's spent fuel pool by July 31, 2007. DOE contractor Fluor Hanford, Inc. began vacuuming the sludge into containers in December 2006 and declared the work complete July 3, 2007.

"I am proud of this accomplishment achieved by the determination and perseverance of our skilled workforce," said DOE Richland Operations Office Manager Dave Brockman. "This is another example of the momentum we continue to sustain in

cleaning up the site and eliminating risk to the Columbia River,” said DOE Richland Operations Office Manager Dave Brockman.

“Placing the sludge in containers helps isolate it from the environment, stages the sludge for future treatment, and enables continued removal of contaminated debris that litters the basin bottom,” said EPA’s Larry Gadbois. “This is an important step toward the March 2009 Tri-Party Agreement commitment to complete removal of the K Basins and their contents.”

The highly radioactive sludge is a combination of dirt, sand, corrosion products, sloughed concrete from the basin walls, and/or fission products that formed throughout the years of underwater spent fuel storage. It was vacuumed into stainless-steel tanks in the basin that provide a secondary barrier to the environment and serve as the feed tanks for a sludge-treatment system currently being evaluated. The 10 cubic yards (8 cubic meters) of sludge from the basin will be treated on site, along with 37 cubic yards (28 cubic meters) of radioactive sludge recently transferred from the K East Basin.

“Fluor workers and engineers once again demonstrated they could tackle some of the toughest cleanup challenges in the Department of Energy,” said Jim Mathews, Fluor Hanford Closure Director for the K West Basin. “It was no small feat to vacuum this highly radioactive material from under and around equipment in the basin, using tools mounted on 27-foot-long poles and remotely controlled cameras in near-zero visibility while wearing a respirator and radiation-protection clothing.”

This work also satisfies a similar commitment to the Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board.

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