



Release date: 02/07/2001

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Uranium Leaves Hanford Site for New Mexico

The movement of excess uranium fuel rods off the Hanford Site began today with the shipment of 0.4 metric tons of the material to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Sandia National Laboratory in New Mexico. Packaged in eight Department of Transportation-approved shipping drums, the uranium fuel rods are expected to arrive at Sandia National Laboratory on Monday, February 12. They will be used at the laboratory for research.

The fuel rods contain pellets of uranium dioxide. A slightly enriched form of uranium, the fuel was used at Hanford for nuclear research in the 1980s. For the shipment to Sandia, the fuel rods were placed inside steel containers, and then 110-gallon drums. Each of the eight drums shipped today weighs about 500 pounds and contains up to 49 fuel rods.

Approximately 2.4 metric tons of the excess uranium fuel rods will be sent to DOE's Portsmouth Site in Ohio. Another 1.6 metric tons of uranium dioxide will be buried in Hanford's low-level waste burial grounds in the Central Plateau. DOE has committed to completing off-site shipments of uranium dioxide by March 31, 2001.

This is the second form of uranium to leave Hanford. In September 2000, Fluor Hanford, Inc., shipped approximately 667 metric tons of uranium trioxide to DOE's Portsmouth Site. In addition, a shipment of surplus uranium billets, used to produce the reactor fuel used in the production of plutonium, is scheduled for early next week. In all, Hanford will move approximately 235 metric tons of uranium billets offsite by March 31, 2001.

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RL 01-038

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