

Release date: June 27, 1996

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DOE

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SIGNIFIES BEGINNING OF THE END FOR PFP**

A stroke of the pen started the clock running on a plan to deactivate Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP). John Wagoner, Manager, Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office, signed the Record of Decision on June 25, 1996, for PFP's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In addition to two years of EIS preparation, this event represents a three- year process of ongoing interactions between DOE and Westinghouse Hanford Company with state and federal regulators, native American tribes and other stakeholders in making key technical decisions for PFP deactivation.

The EIS includes a variety of acceptable options for stabilizing plutonium and cleaning out the plant. This EIS differs from others, in that it identifies a "toolbox" of alternatives for stabilization and cleanout. That is, in addition to the preferred alternatives selected, other alternatives with acceptable impacts are also approved for use and are listed in the Record of Decision.

PFP is one of several former production plants at Hanford that are no longer needed but require costly maintenance and monitoring as long as radioactive and hazardous materials remain inside. Hanford management and operations contractor, Westinghouse Hanford Company, is working with the Department of Energy to speed the cleanout and shutdown of plants, such as PFP, into a completely deactivated safe storage mode.

Accelerated deactivation immediately reduces risks and reduces the "mortgage" on these obsolete, contaminated plants. For example, the PFP plutonium inventory is targeted to be stabilized and safely stored in shielded vaults by the end of 2001 -- one year ahead of schedule. Final cleanout of the PFP Complex is targeted for completion by 2004. These actions are expected to dramatically reduce annual costs from the current \$85 to \$27 million to operate the remaining plutonium vaults.

While the EIS was being prepared over the past two years, interim actions for plutonium cleanout and stabilization were authorized. Interim actions focused on immediately reducing hazards in the plant by reducing surface contamination and cleaning out and converting plutonium residues to a stable oxide (powder) using thermal stabilization.

The PFP complex contains many buildings inside a secured portion of Hanford 200 West Area, near the center of the Hanford Site north of Richland, Washington. This includes the Plutonium Storage and Support Facility where vault storage has been established for special nuclear materials. In December 1994, one of the PFP vaults was used to place the first U.S. weapons- grade plutonium under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as part of the Clinton administration's Nonproliferation Treaty.

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RL 96-063