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DOE

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESPONDS TO STATE VIOLATION, FINE AT HANFORD

The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office has acknowledged a \$20,000 fine by the Washington Department of Ecology for improperly storing dangerous wastes in the 300 Area.

"We made a mistake and we should have corrected it promptly," said John Wagoner, Manager of DOE's Richland Operations Office. "We cannot tolerate any failure to comply with the regulations and we intend to increase the intensity of our enforcement."

The state of Washington today fined DOE and its operations contractor, Westinghouse Hanford Co., for storing incompatible materials in two storage cabinets and failure to recognize the potential for reactions by some of them. An Ecology inspection in September 1995 identified the problem and another inspection in June of this year indicated corrective actions hadn't been taken.

"This is an example of Ecology doing its job at Hanford," said Wagoner. "It's unfortunate, and unacceptable, that in a high-risk environment such as Hanford that this could have fallen through the cracks. But Ecology's oversight brought to our attention that a situation continued to exist which should have been resolved months ago," Wagoner added.

Westinghouse personnel responded immediately following the June inspection, Wagoner said, and within two days the two one foot by 6 feet by 3 feet (1'x6'x3') cabinets had been cleaned. Some of the materials were sent to a recycling center, some placed in flammable materials storage, some were characterized as hazardous waste, properly contained and prepared for burial at a state-permitted facility, and some potentially shock-sensitive materials were explosively destroyed.

The public was not at risk, and the risk to employees was low. The storage cabinets were located outside a building in Hanford's 300 Area which has housed many projects during the site's nuclear production years. The cabinets contained various paint cans, solvents, thinners, photographic chemicals and chemical compounds previously used in projects in the building.

Wagoner said DOE and Westinghouse are reviewing the violation and a response to Ecology is forthcoming.

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