

## Hanford Reactor Defueled Ahead of Schedule

RICHLAND, Wash., April 28, 1995 -- Defueling of the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF) was safely completed on April 19 -- four and a half months ahead of schedule and \$475,000 under budget.

Rod Almquist, Acting Program Manager for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Richland Operations Office (RL), credits the FFTF team for the early defueling operation, which completes the first major phase of the plant transition from operations to a completely deactivated state.

"This was a complete team effort," Almquist said, "Every FFTF employee as well as the Department of Energy facility representatives played a part to achieve this success. When machine failures occurred, the FFTF team developed recovery plans and work-arounds to stay on schedule."

There were other factors that contributed to successful defueling. First, the FFTF scheduling team developed a detailed plan to identify all the steps and resources required for FFTF shutdown and transition. Extensive maintenance was performed on refueling machines to prepare them for the task of defueling. And, FFTF management set high performance standards and emphasized their importance throughout defueling to help ensure success.

"This is a significant event for everyone affiliated with FFTF," said past Director, Chris Midgett. "The staff adjusted to the new cleanup mission and did an outstanding job during this first shutdown activity."

"This success is a stepping stone to bigger challenges ahead," said Ed Loika, Director, FFTF Transition Project. "Careful, critical thinking and detailed planning are already in progress to prepare for the work ahead to safely transition FFTF into a long-term surveillance and maintenance mode."

FFTF, designed to test fuels and materials for advanced nuclear power plants, operated for 10 years and set several world records. In December 1993, when efforts to identify a long-term mission were unsuccessful, DOE Secretary, Hazel O'Leary, directed that the FFTF be placed in a safe shutdown condition.

The next phases of transition, expected to take 5-6 years, include washing irradiated fuel assemblies and placing them into interim dry storage, constructing a sodium storage facility, removing sodium coolant from plant systems and shutting down plant systems and utilities.

Transition places the plant into a stable condition allowing it to be safely left unoccupied until final disposition, which greatly reduces the annual cost of surveillance and maintenance.

Substantial cost savings have been recently achieved at FFTF in addition to that resulting from early defueling. Security procedures were streamlined resulting in savings of \$1.8 million per year and reductions in technical specification requirements save approximately another \$1 million a year.

In January 1995, an innovative plan to reuse sodium test loops used to develop FFTF's cooling system was put in place. The test loops will be transferred to private industry for use in developing a new breed of small electric generators. Reusing the loops rather than disposing of them will save approximately \$1 million.

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