

Evaporator Modifications Save Significant Sums

RICHLAND, Wash., June 1, 1995 -- When Hanford's 242-A Evaporator resumes operations in June, it will use an innovative recycling modification that will save nearly \$40 million over the next 10 years.

The evaporator is essential to the safe management of Hanford's high level nuclear waste. It reduces the volume of waste stored in Hanford's underground storage tanks.

The modification replaces the introduction of filtered raw water into the evaporator process by recycling a portion of the condensed water that is evaporated from the waste. This upgrade was completed ahead of a very challenging schedule and under budget.

"We are excited about the modifications to the evaporator because it means 2.15 million gallons of raw water will not be introduced into the evaporator process over the life of the facility. This will significantly reduce the volume of mixed waste that will have to be stored and treated for disposal and it will save substantial sums of money," said Thomas Seifert, Westinghouse Hanford Company (Westinghouse) tank farms waste minimization/ pollution prevention coordinator.

Westinghouse is the Management and Operations contractor on the 560-square-mile Hanford Site. Its responsibilities include management of Hanford's 57-million gallons of high level radioactive waste.

Two evaporator campaigns conducted in 1994 reduced Hanford's high level radioactive waste volume by nearly five million gallons. The upcoming campaign is expected to reduce the volume by another two million gallons.

The evaporation process frees up space in the newer, double shell storage tanks, allowing the transfer of liquids out of the older single shell storage tanks. Nearly 70 of the single shell tanks are known or suspected to have leaked.

The steam that is boiled off during the evaporation process is condensed back into water and is piped to the Liquid Effluent Retention Facility (LERF) for storage until it can be treated. The waste left behind is sent back to the tank," says Seifert.

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