

Private Sector Help Sought at Hanford

RICHLAND, Wash., July 31, 1995 -- Westinghouse Hanford Company (Westinghouse) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) are seeking commercial technologies to retrieve high-level nuclear waste from an underground storage tank at Hanford.

Westinghouse is the Management and Operations contractor on the 560-square-mile Hanford Site in South-Central Washington State.

"Some of the waste material at Hanford is similar to non-radioactive waste that private industry deals with on a regular basis. If their techniques and technologies can be applied here at Hanford it may save money and speed the retrieval process," said Gary Meyer, manager of Retrieval for Westinghouse.

Westinghouse is placing advertisements in business and trade publication around the country seeking commercially available equipment, engineered concepts, systems, or services for retrieving waste from underground, single shell tanks. The waste is in a variety of forms, including liquid, hard salt cake, and sludges.

An information package has been prepared by a Westinghouse tank waste retrieval team for responding companies which contains information about the tanks, their operating history, the waste types to be encountered, and the challenges of waste removal operations at Hanford.

"We have developed some waste retrieval equipment onsite already and we know it will have to be used in certain circumstances, but we also know there is a lot of commercial equipment already available that can be applied as soon as we are ready to go with it," Meyer said.

As proposals are submitted, they will be reviewed and classified as to their applicability. "Instead of Hanford developing a solution and asking companies to provide equipment accordingly, we will explain our challenges and see what ideas that may already be out there to solve our problems. This is part of the reinventing government initiative at Hanford," Meyer said.

The first application of commercially-supplied equipment will follow the first retrieval of high level waste under the Tri-Party Agreement, expected in late 1996. The Tri-Party Agreement is a binding contract between DOE, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to bring the Hanford Site into environmental compliance and more safely manage the various waste forms on the Site.

"The waste will be removed from tank C-106 which is very hot. Because of the nature of the high heat waste and the short time frame, we will use retrieval equipment developed at Hanford, but we will turn to the private sector for help in removing any residual materials that may remain in the tank. Over time, we expect to use commercially-available equipment and techniques on a broader scale," said Meyer.

Lessons learned at Hanford are expected to help other DOE sites which have similar challenges. Interested firms can contact Westinghouse at (509) 376-5602 or via the Internet at tank_retrieval_team@rl.gov. # # #

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