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DOE Cites Bechtel Jacobs Company for Nuclear Safety Violations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Energy (DOE) today notified the Bechtel Jacobs Company (BJC) that it will fine the company \$247,500 for violations of the department’s nuclear safety requirements. The company is the department’s contractor responsible for environmental cleanup and waste management at its Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee.

“One of our top safety priorities is to improve the performance of subcontractors, and to do that we need to hold prime contractors responsible,” said John Shaw, Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health. “Our goal is to have work conducted in a manner that protects workers, the public and the environment.”

The Preliminary Notice of Violation issued today cites two events that took place in 2004. On May 14, 2004, leakage from a radioactive waste shipment originating from the new Hydrofracture Facility at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory caused contamination to spread to public roadways. The response to the contamination required that several roads be temporarily closed and that contaminated sections be removed and repaved. There was no contamination to personnel or private vehicles.

The second event occurred at the Hot Storage Garden, a radioactive material storage area on the Oak Ridge Reservation. On August 10, 2004, four workers were exposed to radioactive materials while working with contaminated metal storage baskets. Although the occupational radiation exposures resulting were well below DOE regulatory limits, worker exposures could have been significantly higher.

Although both events involved BJC subcontractors, DOE fined BJC the entire penalty. The proposed civil penalty was partially mitigated in recognition of the corrective actions already taken, including BJC’s acceptance of responsibility for the subcontractors’ performance.

The Price-Anderson Amendments Act of 1988 authorizes the Energy Department to undertake regulatory actions against contractors for violations of its nuclear safety requirements. The enforcement program encourages DOE contractors to identify and correct nuclear safety deficiencies at an early stage, before they contribute to or result in more serious events.

Additional details on this and other enforcement actions are available on the Internet at <http://www.eh.doe.gov/enforce>.

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