



EM UPDATE

Working Today To Protect Your Future

Spring 2005

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University Researchers Explore Amchitka Island's Marine Environment

by Rosemary Rehfeldt

Last summer, a diverse group of researchers from five major research universities boarded the Ocean Explorer, a ship leaving port in Adak, Alaska - the western-most settled community in the Western Hemisphere - and headed for Amchitka Island, part of the Aleutian Islands chain. Just a few miles from the International Date Line, Amchitka Island is the site where three underground nuclear tests were conducted by the United States government more than 30 years ago.

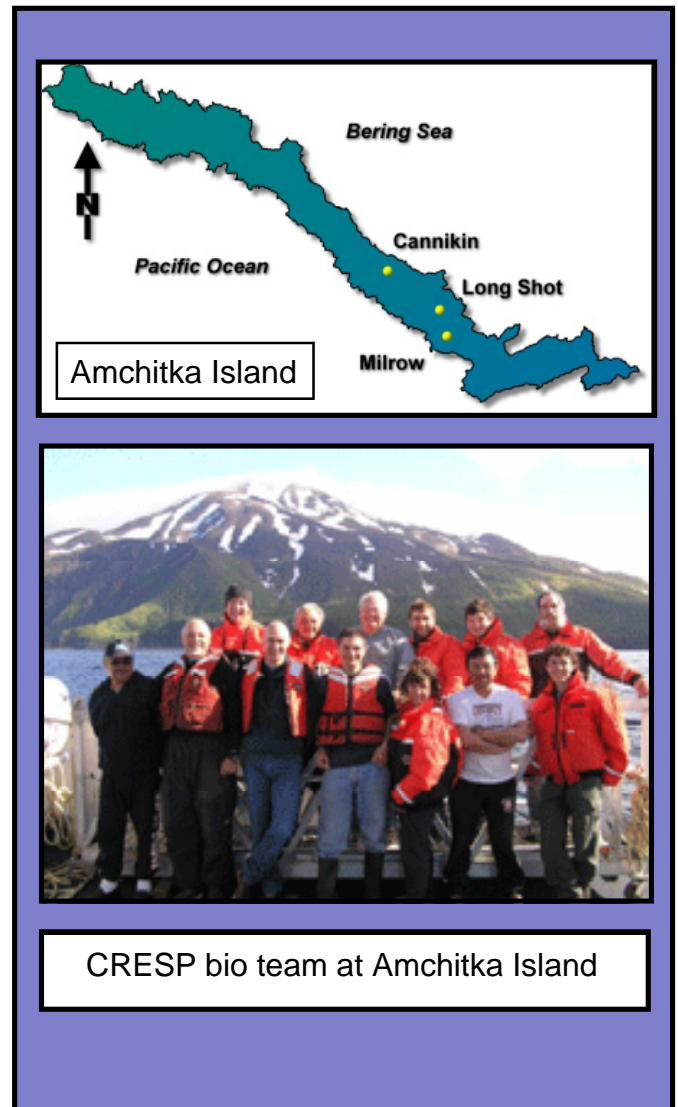
Research efforts, that will run through April 2005, seek to determine if marine biota are currently accumulating radionuclides that could have been released from the underground nuclear tests, and whether there is any current threat to human health or the environment. The marine samples were primarily collected in areas near the three nuclear test locations (Long Shot, Cannikin, and Milrow) on Amchitka Island as well as parallel locations on Kiska Island, a comparison site with comparable marine plants and animals, approximately 50 miles to the west of Amchitka.

The research team is part of a consortium of universities working to advance environmental cleanup. Under a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation, or CRESP, helps provide greater stakeholder understanding of the nation's nuclear weapons production legacy sites.

Early in the planning phase of the study, the research teams involved the native Aleut/Pribilof Islanders and other stakeholders to help assure that the bioindicators selected would be directly relevant to their diets and concerns. Furthermore, samples were chosen to adequately characterize uptake and distribution through major food chains. These studies will also provide baseline data for any later scientific evaluations of the effects of the tests, as well as establishing future ecosystem monitoring programs.

The research was designed in three phases: Phase I (Physical Sampling); Phase II (Biological Sampling); and Phase III (Data Analysis of samples collected). During Phase I, teams of researchers from the University of Alberta, Canada and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks reviewed and digitalized earlier bathymetric data, or measurement of the ocean's depth, beginning with U.S. Geological Survey

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CRESP bio team at Amchitka Island

University Researchers Explore Amchitka Island's Marine Environment (continued)

(USGS) data from the 1940s. The historical data was combined with data recently generated by satellite and other means to synthesize the information available about the subsurface marine environment at Amchitka and to develop global positioning system (GPS) coordinates for the study area. In addition, instrumentation was deployed that produces conductivity, depth and temperature (CDT) profiles, testing for seeps off of the island. Magnetotelluric techniques, which characterize the subsurface geology, were used to analyze the on-island subsurface structure of groundwater flow.

The physical data collected radically improved guidance for pinpointing the focus and priorities for Phase II, the biological sampling effort. This portion of the research was performed under the guidance of researchers from Rutgers University and University of Alaska, Fairbanks. A specimen collection team included researchers from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; the University of Pittsburgh; a representative from the Aleutian/Pribilof Island Association (A/PIA); two Aleut hunters/fishers; as well as three divers from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

The samples collected include algae, invertebrates, fish, and predatory birds; all of which form part of the Aleut food web and are relevant to commercial fisheries in the region. In addition to marine samples, land sampling included collection of eggs and/or chicks, rats (part of the eagle food supply), and plants. All biological sampling was conducted with appropriate state and federal permits and approved university protocols.

As part of the Phase II studies, CRESP also arranged to have researchers from Rutgers University participate on the full expedition of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) trawling boat. Research conducted from the two ships represent a two-pronged approach to the process by which the marine catch for human consumption was obtained: 1) a research vessel (the Ocean Explorer) that incorporated traditional sampling and collection methods as well as Aleut hunting and fishing methods, and 2) a NOAA trawl that is fishing according to normal commercial fishing practices. Using this approach allowed researchers to obtain, and make available for analysis, organisms that both represent not only the marine and the Aleut subsistence food web but the commercial fishery take as well.

Phase III, analysis of the samples, is currently underway and being performed under strict quality control, with duplicate readings from different laboratories. The analyses will be undertaken first as a screening survey of composite samples, with an attempt to identify radionuclides of greatest concern to human and ecological health. The effort will involve the processing of samples primarily at Rutgers University and Vanderbilt University, with the primary analytic efforts taking place at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL), then subject to confirmatory processes to assure the accuracy of those analytic efforts at Vanderbilt University and another confirmatory lab to be determined. Expected completion date for the sampling analysis is April 2005.

For more information on this expedition, and other CRESP activities, visit their website at <http://www.cresp.org>. Additionally, information pertaining to NOAA activities can be viewed on their website at <http://www.noaa.gov>.

Drilling activities at the Central Nevada Test Area

by Rosemary Rehfeldt

Beginning in April 2005, the U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office (NNSA/NSO) Environmental Management (EM) program began drilling one of three hydrogeologic investigation/monitoring wells around the Central Nevada Test Area (CNTA). The CNTA, located in the Hot Creek Valley in northeastern Nye County, Nevada, was the site of an underground nuclear test that took place in 1968.

The underground nuclear test, named Faultless, was conducted by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (predecessor agency to the DOE) on January 19, 1968. The test was part of a program aimed at determining the usefulness of the CNTA as a supplemental testing site to conduct high yield explosive experiments. With a yield of between 200 kilotons and one megaton, Faultless was detonated at 3,200 feet below ground surface. Two other subsurface tests were planned at CNTA but never completed.

The drilling program's purpose is to collect geologic, geophysical, hydrologic and geochemical data to track the potential movement of contaminated groundwater in the subsurface. The drilling will not intersect the test cavity or the contaminated zone, and no radioactive contamination is expected to be encountered in the course of drilling operations. Mobilization of the site and drilling of the first well began in April. Drilling operations for the second well are scheduled for June, and work on the third well will begin in late summer 2005.

Several years ago, the NNSA/NSO conducted a hydrogeologic computer modeling study of the area, known as a Flow and Transport Model. This model illustrates three-dimensional images of groundwater flow patterns and potential pathways for contaminants. The NNSA/NSO completed the Flow and Transport Model along with a modeling report in 2000. The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) accepted the modeling approach the following year. The upcoming drilling and testing effort will help to validate the subsurface Flow and Transport Model for a five year, proof-of-concept period.

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Drilling activities at the Central Nevada Test Area (*continued*)

Current activities at CNTA focus on the *subsurface* environment only. Site characterization for the *surface* area of the CNTA was completed in 1997, and in 2001 the NNSA/NSO completed surface closure at the site. During these activities, the CNTA site surface areas of contamination were closed using a variety of methods: some site called for the construction of engineered covers; others required no further action. The site has been reseeded with native vegetation and the area has been largely reclaimed to a near pre-test condition.

Unlike the Nevada Test Site, which maintains an ongoing mission for the Department of Energy complex, CNTA is no longer active and will eventually be released back to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). Current land use for BLM and USFS in the Hot Creek Valley largely entails grazing and seasonal recreation.

The NNSA/NSO will continue long-term stewardship activities for the subsurface contamination. This stewardship entails continued monitoring of the groundwater quality in and near the CNTA, as well as maintaining subsurface drilling restrictions and exclusion zones sufficient to isolate contamination.

Test Cell A Clean Up Progress on Schedule

by Nick Duhe

The Industrial Sites Project is in full swing working on the Deactivation & Decommissioning of the *Test Cell A* facility at the Nevada Test Site. Project workers are involved in the removal of hazardous materials, such as Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM), lead, mercury, radiological impacted materials, and PCBs. Having removed all ACM from the facility, work crews are focusing their efforts on lead and mercury.

Lead is found in various locations throughout *Test Cell A* in the form of lead bricks and doors, handrail anchors, piping collars, and lead in the Neutronics room. The removal of lead bricks, which were used for shielding purposes at the facility, is no easy task. Even with the use of heavy-duty tools such as prybars and electric chisels, dismantling these bricks will prove difficult due to the sheer number of bricks and their weight. One wall in particular contains lead bricks that are five layers deep, nine bricks high and 19 bricks across. That is 850 individual bricks— each weighing 28 pounds.

Also underway is the removal of items that contain mercury. Items include wall-mounted capacitors and thermostats. Project crews are also working on the removal of certain heavy equipment, such as the Perkins Rectifier Unit that was used to generate and maintain energy levels at *Test Cell A* while test were being conducted.

The next phase in *Test Cell A's* Deactivation & Decommissioning will be to characterize and decontaminate the reactor concrete pad and impacted concrete surfaces. All phases are part of an intensive five-phase cleanup approach, which includes the following:

- 1) Mitigating specific safety hazards, such as poor lighting and the Hantavirus (*work completed*);
- 2) Removing identified hazardous materials, (*work in progress*);
- 3) Characterizing and decontaminating reactor concrete pad and impacted concrete surfaces (*work remains*);
- 4) Demolishing and properly disposing of buildings 3113, 3113A, 3113 B, and 3130 including exterior piping and exhaust stack (*work remains*); and
- 5) Performing final radiological survey on remaining concrete slab (*work remains*).

Closure activities at *Test Cell A* which began in March 2005 are scheduled for completion by September 30, 2005 and will cost an estimated 2.5 million.

Test Cell A is a compound constructed in 1959 to test the Nerva, Kiwi, and Phoebus series rockets developed under the Nuclear Rocket Development Station program. When operations ceased in 1966, Test Cell A remained inactive for many decades.



Park Elementary Science Night

by Angie Barragan (EM Student Forum Member)

On November 19, 2004, the Environmental Management (EM) Public Involvement team and EM Student Forum joined hundreds of kids and adults at Park Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada to explore science in a fun, interactive learning environment. The school's annual *Science Night* featured exhibits and activities relating to a variety of science-based subjects, including geology and oceanography. The EM group was on hand to help inform -students and their families about EM activities occurring at the Nevada Test Site (NTS).

The EM group invited students to participate in three separate experiments: one dealing with radioactive household items, the other with soil contamination, and the last with water flow.

- The first experiment allowed students to use a device called a Geiger Counter to measure the amount of radioactivity in household items such as Coleman Lantern mantels, smoke detectors, and Fiesta Ware dishes. During this experiment, students asked general questions about radiation and also inquired about what other household items might contain radioactivity.
- The next experiment outlined the process by which NTS workers locate contaminants and how-contaminated items are remediated and/or disposed. To find "contamination," which was represented by pieces of paper with coded messages, participants dug in a small sand box using slotted spoons. After finding the "contamination," special decoder glasses worn by the participants would tell them which type of contamination had been found. The three types of contamination represented on the papers were chemical, fuel, and metals, which are all contaminants of concern at the NTS. The majority of questions at this time focused on the effects of contamination on the environment.
- The last experiment was designed to show how different geologic material can affect water flow beneath the NTS. Attendees were asked to choose between three bottles to determine which bottle would allow the water to flow through the fastest. Each bottle was filled with a different material: the first bottle contained different size marbles; the second contained an open mesh material; and the third contained a household cleaning sponge cut to the diameter of the bottle. During the experiment, most participants wanted to know why the sponge was similar to the aquifer under the NTS and if all aquifers are the same.



The Environmental Management (EM) Program is committed to education and sponsors a variety of activities throughout Southern Nevada. A pilot program formed in 2001, the EM Student Forum was designed to enhance community outreach. The program was also created to provide essential feedback on communications materials and product development. Comprised of a small group of 10-12 students from the Advanced Technologies Academy High School in Las Vegas, Nevada, the EM Student Forum works with members of the EM Public Involvement team.

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Park Elementary Science Night *(continued)*

Attendees also had the chance to view the EM Kids Display created by previous Student Forum members to illustrate EM activities at the NTS. In addition, students received activity books full of games and puzzles that reinforce topics from the EM Kids Display.

According to event organizers, EM's participation in *Science Night* contributed to its success. Attendees complimented the EM Group's exhibits and activities and the EM Student Forum's willingness to take time to explain them.

EM Program Welcomes Tim Murphy

by Michelle Meade

The Environmental Management (EM) program at the U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office would like to welcome Tim Murphy as the new State of Nevada representative providing oversight for the EM Program. Murphy serves as the Las Vegas Office Manager for the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) and the Chief for the Bureau of Federal Facilities.

A 19-year veteran with the State, Murphy's background includes experience in wastewater, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and Superfund activities. For ten years, he served as supervisor for the Bureau of Waste Management's RCRA Hazardous Waste program. He then transferred to the Bureau of Corrective Actions to provide oversight for the Technical Services Branch and the Superfund/Brownfields/Voluntary Cleanup program. In May 2004, Murphy moved from Carson City to Las Vegas to again manage the RCRA Hazardous Waste program. In August, he was promoted to his current position.

Murphy will continue the Bureau of Federal Facilities' mission of providing programmatic and regulatory oversight for EM at the Nevada Test Site. The Bureau, which had been divided between Carson City and Las Vegas, was recently consolidated to provide better interaction with the Nevada Site Office and better work with the local community regarding Bureau activities. For more information on NDEP activities visit <http://ndep.nv.gov/>.

Member of EM Takes Facilitation to the Next Level

by Angela Ramsey

In November 2004, Environmental Management (EM) Communications Specialist Carla Sanda, a SNJV contractor became one of only two Certified™ Professional Facilitators in the state of Nevada—one of fewer than 350 in the world! The certification demonstrates Sanda successfully completed an intensive, often grueling, testing process administered by the International Association of Facilitators (IAF).

Having facilitated countless meetings for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) over the years, Sanda saw the challenge to complete the IAF certification program as a way to expand her credentials as a facilitator and provide an even broader range of skills and services to DOE. Her expertise also benefits the taxpayer's bottom line by eliminating the need to hire outside services, thus saving money. "We are very fortunate to have someone in-house with these qualifications," said Acting Assistant Manager for Environmental Management, Stephen Mellington. "Carla's support is invaluable."

Meeting facilitators are often crucial to the success of a meeting—providing unbiased structure to the meeting process while ensuring open and honest dialogue. "My role," according to Sanda, "is to define the focus of meetings, keep participants on track, and make sure that each participant has a voice in the outcome."

During hour-long one-on-one interview sessions, participants in the IAF certification process answered questions on group processes, team dynamics, and problem solving. They were then required to conduct mock facilitation sessions.

During hour-long one-on-one interview sessions, participants in the IAF certification process answered questions on group processes, team dynamics, and problem solving. They were then required to conduct mock facilitation sessions.

The IAF facilitation training and subsequent certification also helps Sanda in her role as the liaison to EM for the Community Advisory Board. The board meets regularly to formulate recommendations for EM activities at the Nevada Test Site. As an experienced facilitator, Sanda helps the board members focus their efforts and make the most out of meeting time.

Attaining the highly specialized certification was indeed a challenge, according to Sanda. Prior to even being accepted into the certification program, Sanda underwent extensive training and a rigorous application process. The IAF determined that she met the basic criteria and then invited her to be part of an intense peer review of her knowledge, experience, and skill level. Those who passed the exhaustive process were granted an in-depth critique of his/her performance and finally the coveted Certified™ Professional Facilitator title.

"It was the best training I've ever had," commented Sanda. "Facilitation is a valuable tool, and this training and certification process has really taught me how to use it."

The IAF is a non-profit professional association whose goal is to further the profession of facilitation (training professional facilitators represents just a portion of the IAF's work). Since its formation in the early 1990's, the association has grown from 70 charter members to over 1300 members representing more than 20 countries. For more information, visit: <http://www.iafworld.org>.

CAB Update

by Carla Sanda

As the Community Advisory Board for Nevada Test Site Programs (CAB) enters its eleventh year of operation, it continues to focus on Environmental Management (EM) activities at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) and provide information to Southern Nevada stakeholders at each of its four annual publicized public meetings.



At its most recent public meeting held in Las Vegas on March 9, CAB Budget Committee members reported on what has become an annual tradition — their review and prioritization of the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office EM budget. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) works on a 3-year budget cycle (e.g., currently using the fiscal year 2005 budget, “fine-tuning” the request for the fiscal year 2006 budget, and putting together the fiscal year 2007 budget request). Therefore, the CAB focused on the fiscal year 2007 budget for each of the seven EM projects. This year’s effort began with committee members setting aside nearly a full day to meet with each of the EM project managers to discuss projects in detail and gain a clear understanding of the plans for fiscal year 2007. Over a period of months, committee members worked together to review and understand the projects and in turn developed a prioritization process. The final results and recommendations were presented to the entire CAB, the community, and EM representatives at the March 9 meeting. EM is now in the process of reviewing and considering the recommendations as it finalizes its request to the Office of Management & Budget for fiscal year 2007 funds.

The CAB’s Underground Test Area (UGTA) Committee is wrapping up several years of work focusing on groundwater issues at the NTS. Following a request from the CAB in fiscal year 2000, EM agreed to fund an external peer review of the overall UGTA project strategy. As a result of the CAB’s comments and feedback on the peer review, the site’s Assistant Manager for Environmental Management invited the CAB to further review the project and provide recommendations for placement of a future monitoring well at the NTS. The CAB’s UGTA Committee accepted that task, which has involved extensive review of DOE Nevada Site Office technical reports and maps and numerous meetings with NNSA Nevada Site Office staff and members of the UGTA Technical Working Group. To ensure that potentially affected stakeholders were aware of this effort, the CAB carried out the following: conducted formal public information meetings in both Las Vegas, Nevada and rural communities; participated in several meetings with Nye County representatives; sponsored information groundwater workshops; and prepared and presented information at town board briefings in the rural communities that would be most likely impacted if radionuclides were ever detected in groundwater outside the NTS boundaries.

As a result of the CAB’s study and the stakeholder feedback received, the CAB is recommending a network of three wells located down gradient and southwest of Pahute Mesa. Several factors

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CAB Update *(continued)*

contributed to the CAB's recommendation: 1) High-yield underground nuclear tests were conducted in this region; 2) The site is located in an area with a very steep groundwater gradient; and 3) The area is up gradient of the residents of Oasis Valley, Beatty, and Amargosa. According to Kathleen Peterson, UGTA Committee Chair, "The CAB believes this network of wells is vital to characterize the groundwater flow path toward the communities we perceive to be at the greatest risk." The CAB transmitted its initial recommendations in a letter to EM dated February 9, 2005 and is following up with a detailed recommendation packet that will provide specific details along with a chronology of activities that the CAB has undertaken as part of this major initiative. Further information is available on the CAB's website at www.ntscab.com.

Tucson Hosts Waste Management Community

by Dona Merritt

Blue skies, warm weather, and a successful meeting of the minds! That is what the Nevada Site Office Environmental Management (EM) Program encountered while exhibiting at the 32nd annual Waste Management Symposium in Tucson, Arizona.

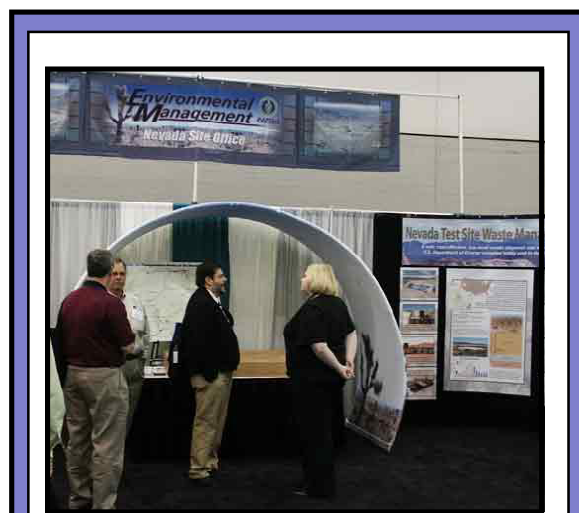
Every year, government entities and companies from around the world attend the conference to showcase a wide range of waste management and environmental restoration products and services. The Nevada Site Office EM Program was one of nearly 200 exhibitors at this year's event, which was held February 27 through March 3, 2005.

A highlight of this year's EM exhibit was the Area 5 Radioactive Waste Management Site display model, which was recently updated to depict the five new low-level waste disposal cells that were excavated this past year. Attendees also enjoyed a realistic glimpse of the diverse activities conducted at the Nevada Test Site as they viewed the Groundwater, Industrial Sites, and Waste Management overview videos.

In addition to the extensive exhibits, conference activities included a technical program featuring more than 70 sessions relating to the Symposium's theme: *Global Accomplishments in Environmental and Radioactive Waste Management: Cost Effectiveness, Risk Reduction and Technology Implementation*. Throughout the week, representatives from the EM Program participated in several oral presentations and poster sessions discussing how these topics relate to waste management operations at the Nevada Test Site.

The Waste Management Symposium is organized by WM Symposia, Inc., an Arizona non-profit corporation, and hosted by the University of Arizona. The conference is organized in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Energy, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, and International Atomic Energy Agency. Attendees travel from around the world to learn about products, services, and activities that are beneficial to the nuclear waste management community.

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Kelly Snyder and Bruce Becker discuss Nevada Test Site disposal capabilities with attendees visiting the Nevada Site Office Environmental Management exhibit at the 2005 Waste Management Symposium in Tucson, Arizona

The Nevada Test Site's state-of-the-art radioactive waste management facilities currently accept low-level radioactive waste from 29 generators across the United States. During fiscal year 2004, more than 3.7 million cubic feet of low-level radioactive waste was disposed at the Nevada Test Site.

Visit http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/factsheet/DOENV_657REV2.pdf for more information on the Low-Level Waste Project at the Nevada Test Site Office.

Tucson Hosts Waste Management Community *(continued)*

To wrap up the week, approximately 50 symposium attendees traveled to Nevada for a first-hand look at waste management activities on the Nevada Test Site. The group, which was largely composed of individuals from other countries, participated in what was a combined tour of the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain Project. The tour not only provided insight into the future of waste management at the Nevada Test Site but also, undoubtedly, inspired ideas for next year's symposium.

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Transportation Display on the Road

by Dona Merritt

The Nevada Site Office's transportation exhibit is making its way around rural Nevada providing residents a detailed, full-color look at low-level waste transportation. The display illustrates the routes waste generators use to transport low-level waste to the Nevada Test Site, and it also shows the number of waste shipments that take place in a given year.

The recently updated exhibit began its journey last September at the Beatty library where visitors were able to view the display along with a mock-up of a low-level waste drum. This mock, *non-radioactive* version was cut in half and covered with plexi-glass to reveal the types of items that are typically disposed as low-level waste.

Following a month-long stay in Beatty, the exhibit traveled to the Amargosa Valley library, Pahrump library, Yucca Mountain Information Center in Goldfield, and is currently on display at the Central Nevada Museum in Tonopah. The exhibit is available for setup at other public venues. Those who are interested should contact Nevada Site Office Environmental Management by e-mail at [http://envmgt@nv.doe.gov](mailto:envmgt@nv.doe.gov).



Employee Of The Month

October 2004.....Bill Wilborn

January 2005.....Kelly Snyder

Marla Libidinsky

February 2005.....Pete Sanders

March 2005.....Ken Small

Nevada Test Site Public Tours 2005 Schedule

April 27, 2005

May 26, 2005

June 29, 2005

September 20, 2005

October 26, 2005

November 22, 2005



Low Level Radiocative
Waste Management Site



Sedan Crater



Rail Road Bridge



Apple II House

Tour participants will visit historic nuclear test locations, such as Sedan Crater, as well as observe areas where work activities are currently taking place, like the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Sites. The tour covers approximately 250 miles. Call (702) 295-0944 for more information.



Questions should be directed to:
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To request information on Environmental Management activities, including the CAB, e-mail your request to the address below.

Include your name, address, phone number and request information.

Envmgt@nv.doe.gov