



EM UPDATE

Working Today To Protect Your Future

Spring 2007

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AMEM Corner

by Stephen Mellington

All of us within the [Environmental Management](#) Program maintain a constant vigil to meet commitments to our stakeholders. One such commitment is the safe and responsible transportation of radioactive waste within the state of Nevada.

Last December, Nevada Site Office representatives briefed Las Vegas City Council members about on-going low-level and mixed low-level waste shipments to the Nevada Test Site, related disposal activities, regulatory drivers, and our dedication to safety and the community. During the meeting, Frank Di Sanza, the federal project director for Waste Management reiterated our commitment to communicate with the Council, other local agencies, and stakeholders – and to effectively follow up on any concerns or questions they may have. These efforts are in addition to the regular contact between the Nevada Site Office, the State of Nevada Divisions of Environmental Protection and Emergency Management, and emergency responders from several Nevada counties.

While the discussions with the Las Vegas City Council members were initiated from media coverage of our activities, it presented a welcome opportunity to explain our conservative approach to radioactive waste shipments as well as our procedures for the review and publication of related transportation data. The Nevada Site Office Environmental Management [transportation webpage](#) contains links to inbound shipment information and quarterly reports which are also disseminated to regional officials. In addition, Nevada Site Office Environmental Management representatives regularly brief the [Community Advisory Board](#) for Nevada Test Site Programs, a local stakeholder group.

Of course, the hard work and dedication of all Environmental Management personnel (federal and contractor alike) is required to meet our commitments. Jerry Talbot, the new Manager for the Nevada Site Office, leads by example and has infused a fresh approach to opportunities and challenges. Although the primary mission of the Nevada Site Office is stockpile stewardship, Jerry is very supportive of and committed to the success of our Environmental Management mission. As I see it, we are a cohesive team successfully working together to meet the needs of the U.S. Department of Energy Complex while ensuring the safety of the workers, the environment, and the public.



Stephen Mellington,
Assistant Manager for
Environmental Management
(AMEM)

It is important to note that the commercial carriers of the radioactive waste must comply with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations ([Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations](#)) and are legally bound by their contract with the waste generator. Therefore, generators are responsible for communicating Nevada Site Office routing preferences to the carrier and ensuring that the transportation of the waste is conducted in accordance with Section 6.4 of the [Nevada Test Site Waste Acceptance Criteria](#). The Nevada Site Office may suspend a generator's shipments should the waste be transported in violation of the Criteria or if waste is not transported along one of the identified preferred routes.

In addition to route sensitivities, ongoing reviews of shipping campaigns and the associated disposal activities generate Lessons Learned. These areas of improvement are regularly communicated by Nevada Test Site Disposal Operations to the [Radioactive Waste Acceptance Program](#). Upon completion of a detailed evaluation which considers factors such as safety and cost-effectiveness, it may be determined that a revision to the Waste Acceptance Criteria is necessary. This was the case with intermodal containers used for 120 rail-truck shipments transferred in Cisco, Utah on its journey to the Nevada Test Site. Lessons Learned from this experience led to size and weight restrictions for the use of intermodal containers which are identified in Appendix F of the Nevada Test Site Waste Criteria.

EM Site-Specific Advisory Boards Congregate in Las Vegas

by Kelly Snyder

With more than 50 people in attendance, citizens from communities located near seven U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) sites scattered throughout the country converged in Las Vegas, Nev. on March 28 – 29 to discuss and provide recommendations to the federal government on Environmental Management (EM) activities. Along with DOE Headquarters personnel, including the Assistant Secretary for EM, James Rispoli, advisory board members from each EM Site-Specific Advisory Board discussed a variety of issues including remote-handled transuranic waste, national technology development initiatives, and stakeholder participation in the federal government budget process.

The three day event kicked off with a full-day tour of the Nevada Test Site (NTS). A highlight for tour participants was the in-depth description and first-hand look at low-level radioactive waste disposal at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex. The tour also provided a glimpse into historical activities at the NTS, including a stop at Sedan Crater (location of an underground nuclear experiment which resulted in displacement of more than 12 million tons of soil), and the Apple II House, which was used as part of a Civil Defense exercise in 1955.

Jerry Talbot, the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office Manager, opened the formal meeting by expressing his appreciation to participants for their volunteer efforts and went on to stress the importance of maintaining an EM program that is transparent and accountable. “It is our goal to have a cooperative relationship with the citizens that are near the Nevada Test Site. Ultimately, we are responsible for the area...but at the same time we know it is essential to include stakeholders in the process.”

With a very similar message, Assistant Secretary Rispoli offered the advisory boards the opportunity to further influence EM’s budget request to Congress by reviewing upcoming five-year budget projections. Mr. Rispoli underscored the importance of informing stakeholders of the budget process and invited their comments as to where federal dollars should be focused.

The seven boards will continue discussions at a September 2007 meeting that will be held at DOE’s Paducah, Ky. facility. To learn more about stakeholder involvement and Site-Specific Advisory Board activities, please log on to www.em.doe.gov.



Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Boards were developed to involve stakeholders more directly in U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Management cleanup decisions. While only one Federal Advisory Committee Act-chartered Environmental Management Site-Specific Advisory Board exists, seven local Boards under the national charter have been organized at Hanford (Wash.), Idaho, Northern N.M., Nevada, Oak Ridge (Tenn.), Paducah (Ky.), and Savannah River (S.C.).

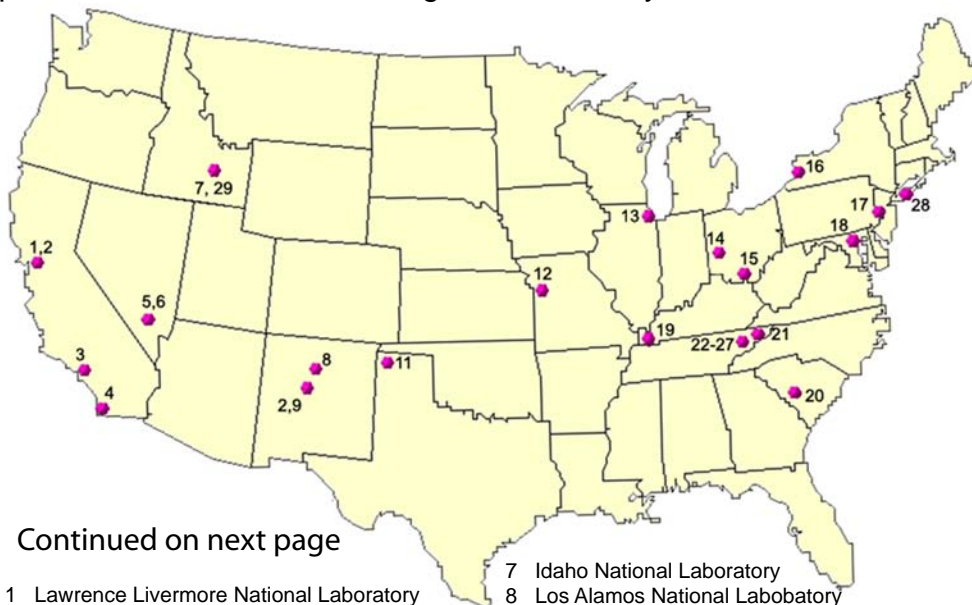
Radioactive Waste Acceptance Program Audit Overview

by Josh Dinsman

When a normal household accumulates trash, getting rid of it is pretty easy: simply toss it in a dumpster or set it out by the curb on trash day, and that is the end of it. Disposing low-level radioactive waste, however, is – to say the least – a bit more involved.

For instance, when dealing with low-level radioactive waste, it is necessary to have some sort of framework to ensure that waste disposal is conducted in a safe and successful manner. At the Nevada Test Site (NTS), the [Radioactive Waste Acceptance Program](#) (RWAP) does just that. RWAP provides oversight for the twenty-nine approved generators that are spread across the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) complex, located in fourteen different states from California to New York. As RWAP Manager Gary Pyles explains, “RWAP is responsible for both approving and monitoring generators to ensure that they are in compliance with the rules and regulations that have been established for waste disposal at the NTS.”

So what does one have to do to become an approved generator? According to Pyles, “Before RWAP gives its stamp of approval, a generator has to meet the requirements laid out in the [Nevada Test Site Waste Acceptance Criteria](#) (NTSWAC).” These criteria not only require generators to submit documentation, such as waste profiles and a Quality Assurance Program Plan, but also allow NTS RWAP personnel to conduct a thorough on-site facility evaluation.



Continued on next page

- 1 Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- 2 Sandia National Laboratories - California
- 3 Boeing-Rocketdyne
- 4 General Atomics
- 5 National Security Technologies, LLC
- 6 Stoller-Navarro Joint Venture

- 7 Idaho National Laboratory
- 8 Los Alamos National Laboratory
- 9 Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute
- 10 Sandia National Laboratories - New Mexico
- 11 Pantex Plant
- 12 Kansas City Plant
- 13 Argonne National Laboratory

- 14 Fernald
- 15 Portsmouth
- 15 West Valley Demonstration Project
- 17 Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory
- 18 Aberdeen Proving Grounds
- 19 Paducah
- 20 Savannah River Site
- 21 Nuclear Fuel Service
- 22 Perma-Fix
- 23 Duratek
- 24 Foster-Wheeler
- 25 Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- 26 Oak Ridge Reservation
- 27 BWXT Y-12
- 28 Brookhaven National Laboratory
- 29 Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility

Generators include both U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and U.S. Department of Defense-approved facilities that produce low-level or mixed low-level waste. The Nevada Test Site (NTS) currently accepts low-level and mixed low-level waste from 29 approved generators. Low-level waste disposed at the NTS generally consists of construction debris, trash, soil, and equipment that is radioactively contaminated, while mixed low-level waste consists of low-level waste “mixed” with a hazardous constituent. Hazardous wastes are materials that are toxic, corrosive, reactive, ignitable, or are specifically identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “hazardous.” Generators must demonstrate that proposed waste meets established limitations on specific contents, including free liquids, particulates, compressed gases, disease-causing or infectious agents, or explosive material, as outlined in the Nevada Test Site Waste Acceptance Criteria.

Once a generator has been approved for waste shipment and disposal, it is then subject to periodic planned and unannounced facility evaluations. If auditors discover a problem during an on-site inspection, they have the authority to suspend the generator's approval to send waste to the NTS for permanent disposal. When this occurs, the generator must resolve the problem and then request further review and approval before the NTS will again accept waste shipments.

During a facility evaluation, auditors inspect all stages of a generator's waste management program, including generation, characterization, packaging, and shipment. An audit team, which usually consists of four members who are trained in at least one of four specific areas - quality assurance, traceability of waste, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) characterization, and radiological characterization - is responsible for conducting these on-site inspections.

When an RWAP audit takes place, one of the most important members of the audit team is the Audit Team Lead (ATL). According to Pyles, "This is the individual that organizes, directs, and coordinates an audit." For example, to start the audit process, the ATL holds a pre-audit team meeting to brief team members on the scope of the audit, assign areas of responsibility, provide checklists, and ensure that pertinent information needed for the audit is available.

Next, the ATL conducts an entrance meeting with the generator's management team to review the audit plan, introduce audit team members, discuss the audit process, and establish channels of communication. Then the real work begins....

During the actual audit, team members review a generator's program to verify that it complies with the NTSWAC. According to Pyles, "RWAP critiques a generator's program by watching personnel go about their daily tasks, such as analyzing jars of soil or preparing waste for shipment." If deficiencies are discovered, the RWAP team issues a Corrective Action Request (CAR). CARs require the generator to document a root cause, establish a corrective action, and implement steps to preclude occurrence. If a generator fails to respond to a CAR, penalties such as a suspension of shipping and disposal of specific waste streams are imposed.

Once the audit is complete, the ATL meets with fellow team members to ensure that all activities have been completed, to identify deficiencies and observations, and to reach consensus on the generator's programmatic compliance. Finally, the audit concludes with an exit meeting where the ATL discusses the overall results of the audit with the generator's management team, presents CAR conditions, provides a draft audit summary, and discusses the actions required to complete the audit.

Audits are considered to be closed once the ATL issues an audit report, completes an audit checklist and Memorandum for the Record (MFR), and updates the facility evaluation log. Once the audit is complete, ATLs continue to track any CARs that were issued during the original audit until they are closed.

Although it is a detailed and exhaustive procedure, Pyles notes that "the RWAP audit process is critical in determining if a generator's waste certification program is adequately documented, implemented, and in compliance with the NTSWAC." Through their hard work, ATLs and the rest of the RWAP team facilitate the management of low-level radioactive waste in a safe and compliant manner, while ensuring the integrity of the Nevada Test Site disposal operations and the protection of the workers, the public, and the environment.

SHREDDING...

a Novel Approach to Waste Disposal at the NTS

by John Myers

The Stoller-Navarro Joint Venture (SNJV) [Industrial Sites](#) team has been addressing a big challenge: characterizing and disposing of nearly 80,000 containers of soil and vegetation samples that are stored at the Nevada Test Site (NTS). To further complicate matters, the samples are in containers ranging in size from 0.5-liter bottles to 5-gallon metal buckets. Working closely with the U.S. Department of Energy, the team took a look at the task and came up with an innovative approach that will not only provide for appropriate sampling of the container contents to ensure that they meet the NTS Waste Acceptance Criteria – but will also ensure the safest approach to human health and the environment. Believe it or not, the method selected is something akin to what is now a common household object -- a shredder.

Needless to say, the team envisioned a shredder somewhat larger and more powerful than the household version that jams when more than a few pieces of paper are fed through the slot! After more than a year of planning, and a three-month procurement process, an industrial-sized shredder -- measuring 7' high x 7' wide x 2.5' long -- is now on-site.

This massive unit is designed to process approximately 200 containers per hour. Once everything is in place, the 80,000 containers will be individually placed on a covered conveyor belt and fed directly into the shredder. As each container is shredded, it drops directly into a large metal box that can then be safely disposed of at the Radioactive Waste Management Site at the NTS. Instead of opening each individual container to assess its contents, representative samples will be taken as each box is filled with the shredded material.

This novel approach to waste consolidation is faster, more cost effective, and reduces risks as low as reasonably achievable for those involved in disposal activities. Yet another advantage to this approach is that the volume of waste will be drastically reduced. Similar to crushing empty plastic bottles and aluminum cans to save space in the recycling bin, the industrial shredder will compact the containers to maximize disposal efficiency. It is estimated that the disposal volume will be reduced by 50-65 percent from the original container volume, and the required sampling of the containers will be reduced by 80-90 percent. It is estimated it will take 10 weeks to shred the samples.

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- Samples contain soil and vegetation collected subsequent to historical testing activities conducted in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) and islands throughout the south Pacific.
- Thousands of samples were taken during the 1970s and 1980s to support historic studies at the NTS.
- The samples have been stored in Area 26 of the NTS since the mid-1970s.

The resulting volume and sampling cost efficiencies far outweigh the \$80,000 initial price of the industrial shredder, but one of the most important benefits to using the shredder cannot be expressed in dollars. Since some samples may be radioactive, it is important to reduce potential hazards to workers. Reducing handling time is an integral part to reducing possible exposure. Workers will only handle the samples a short distance from their shelves and place them on the covered conveyor belt, which will then feed the shredding mechanism situated approximately 10-15 feet away from workers. Additionally, to minimize flying debris and airborne particles, the shredder operates at a steady, low speed. As a further precaution, respiratory protection is part of the required personal protective equipment, and the proper air permits will be obtained before any shredding activities begin.

The benefits of the shredder may not end here! Upon completion of this project, the shredder will be dismantled and decontaminated, so that it will be available for future projects at the NTS.

EM PARTNER – National Security Technologies, LLC

by John Myers

Nestled away in a remote area of the Nevada Test Site, a crew works day after day disposing waste from across the country. But this is not just any waste; nor is this just any crew. This is low-level radioactive waste and this crew is a group of workers who have chosen to work together as a family.

Merl Schwartzwalter, the NSTec Low-Level Waste Supervisor, says this “family of highly dedicated individuals, works together in many different conditions to accomplish one goal: to get the job done safely.” The key to this goal, according to Schwartzwalter, is a positive attitude. With a track record of more than 304,000 work hours without a lost time accident, it appears this family is doing something right in its quest to meet the most important goal of NSTec: to complete every task safely while complying with all regulations and agreements.

This close-knit group embodies the dedication and teamwork of NSTec, the Management and Operating contractor for the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office (NSO) since 2006. But not all of the programs that NSTec supports are located on the Nevada Test Site, or even in Las Vegas. NSTec provides applied science and engineering support to Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. NSTec scientists also have a presence at the Special Technologies Laboratory in California and the Remote Sensing Laboratory near Washington, D.C.

However, more than two-thirds of NSTec’s employees can be found at the Nevada Test Site and the Las Vegas and North Las Vegas facilities. NSTec provides necessary services to the entire Nevada Test Site Complex and the NSO. Services include project management, engineering, facility and infrastructure management, construction, maintenance, utilities, emergency management and rescue, and site services. A wide range of activities including administration, national security operations, defense experimentation, stockpile stewardship, and environmental management also take place.

- Northrop Grumman Corporation, AECOM, CH2M Hill, and Nuclear Fuel Services formed NSTec in 2005.
- Each parent company brings different backgrounds and experiences to the table.
- Northrop Grumman Corporation is a leader in advanced defense technologies, with experience in the management of complex operations.
- AECOM, the world’s largest architecture and engineering firm, has decades of experience working on the Nevada Test Site as Holmes and Narver.
- CH2M Hill provides revolutionary ideas in environmental and waste management.
- Nuclear Fuel Services brings extensive experience in nuclear operations as the provider of nuclear fuel for the US Navy.

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A major focus of NSTec's Environmental Management mission is the safe handling and management of transuranic and low-level and mixed low-level waste. A significant difference between these two activities is that all transuranic waste is destined for permanent disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico; while low-level and mixed low-level waste is accepted from approved federal generator sites across the United States for disposal at the Nevada Test Site. NSTec is responsible for ensuring that all waste types undergo proper characterization, size reduction, and repackaging in the safest and most cost-effective manner. In the case of low-level and mixed low-level waste, NSTec actively communicates and supports generator efforts to complete the rigorous certification and approval process required prior to the shipment of waste to the Nevada Test Site for disposal. "This proactive communication, along with increased efficiencies in the waste profile review process, has promoted a more open relationship between NSTec and waste generators and ultimately saves tax-payer dollars through a reduction of overall disposal costs," adds Greg Geisinger, Manager of NSTec's Radioactive Waste Acceptance Program.

The second major aspect of NSTec's Environmental Management activities is the remediation of legacy environmental contamination remaining at the Nevada Test Site from years of nuclear research and testing. Potential contamination of the groundwater resulting from the 828 historic underground nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site is investigated by scientists within the Underground Test Area sub-project. NSTec is involved in the planning, engineering, management and construction of groundwater wells to obtain water and soil samples which are analyzed. The data compiled from the laboratory analyses is used to identify where the groundwater is located and how it moves, which is essential to establishing a long-term groundwater monitoring network.

In addition to groundwater contamination, surface contamination is also a concern on the Nevada Test Site. The Industrial Sites sub-project is tasked with remediating areas located at the Nevada Test Site and the Nevada Test and Training Range that were used to support past nuclear testing operations. NSTec supports these remediation efforts by providing technical expertise, union labor force, heavy equipment, and any construction support needed. NSTec also manages any waste generated during the activities. One notable task in progress is the decontamination and decommissioning of the Area 27 Super Kukla Facility. NSTec and the NSO's Architectural and Engineering contractor are interfacing to close the facility this year. (To learn more about this joint effort, take a look at the article entitled "[Super Kukla: Teamwork At Its Finest!](#)")

Although all of the initiatives described above bring a unique set of challenges, NSTec's overarching priority is to complete every task safely while complying with all regulations and agreements. Needless to say, they are off to a great start, and we'll keep you updated on this family's accomplishments in future editions of the EM Update.

From the High Seas to the High Desert: Admiral Talbot Takes Over as Manager of the Nevada Site Office

by Josh Dinsman

After a stellar 35-year career in the United States Navy, most of us would probably opt for retirement, perhaps to a place far from the sea, where the weather is sunny, warm, and, well – dry! However, for Rear Admiral Gerald L. Talbot, Jr., moving to Las Vegas, Nev. after his retirement from the U.S. Navy had little to do with the city's inland location or its desert climate. Instead, this move offered Talbot an opportunity to start a new chapter in his distinguished career in public service by assuming the role of Manager for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Nevada Site Office (NSO).

As of January 2007, responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the approximately 1,375-square-mile Nevada Test Site (NTS) and its associated sites and facilities rests with Talbot. In his new position, Talbot oversees and implements NNSA initiatives related to stockpile stewardship and management, nuclear test readiness, crisis management, nuclear nonproliferation, environmental management and stewardship, alternative energy, and science and technology development.

But why take on such a demanding role at this stage in one's career? For Talbot, the answer is simple... "After retiring from the Navy, I wanted something different, but I also still wanted to contribute." In his new role, Talbot is putting his leadership experience to use by ensuring that work at the NTS is conducted effectively and efficiently. As Talbot explains, "The government is often saddled with the reputation of being a resource consumer. We want to change that image. We want to understand the business aspects of what we do here. We want to really understand the product we deliver so that we can provide it to the public at the best value. That requires leadership."

And leadership experience is exactly what Talbot brings to the NTS. Before retiring from the U.S. Navy, Talbot served as the Director of the Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division – a \$25 billion program designed to plan and execute all Navy policies that govern the accession and career management of 360,000 officer and enlisted personnel. Earlier in his career, Talbot commenced sea duty on the USS Silversides after one year of naval nuclear training. His other sea assignments included Weapons Officer on the USS Sunfish, Chief Engineer of the USS James K. Polk, Executive Officer aboard the USS Aspro, Commanding Officer of the USS Tautog, and Commander of Submarine Squadron Eight.

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Rear Admiral
Gerald L. Talbot, Jr.

Talbot's shore tours began with the DOE's Naval Reactors Programs as a special assistant to the Director. From this assignment he served in the Bureau of Naval Personnel as the Nuclear Enlisted Program Manager. Talbot also served as the Executive Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Undersea Warfare); Deputy Secretary, Joint Staff; Director of the Submarine/Nuclear Power Distribution Division; and as the Nuclear Propulsion Program Manager at the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Despite his wealth of experience and his new leadership role as Manager of the NSO, Talbot wants his employees to know that he is still approachable. "I want people to know that I have made my separation from the Navy. I'm Jerry now, not The Admiral. Basically, I am just another employee."

Having been an employee of the NSO for a couple of months now, what does Talbot think of his latest career decision? As he himself states, "Professionally, the people are great. At every level of management, whether it's in the office or out at the site, these are really just good people and great Americans. I'm impressed with their focus on safety and security, but also on getting the job done."

Personally, Talbot is also happy with the decision he has made. "Having spent 35 years in the Navy, being on submarines, away from home for months at a time, it is nice to be able to come home every night to my wife and enjoy the typical American home setting. Definitely, there have been no disappointments."

Super Kukla: Teamwork At Its Finest!

by Nick Duhe

When last we left the Super Kukla (Super K) project in the Winter 2006 EM Update, the Industrial Sites Sub-Project was in Phase One of a six-step process to decontaminate and decommission the site (see [“It’s a Bird; It’s a Plane, No! It’s Super K!”](#))

Since that time, much has been accomplished at the Super K site. Samples have been collected, surveys conducted, and air monitoring established; but the real highlight was demolition and removal of the Reactor High Bay building. Although I tried to capture what actually took place that cold day in January, I just couldn’t do the event justice, so instead I made a video. [Take a few minutes to check it out.](#)

When asked about the reactor high bay demolition, Stoller-Navarro Joint Venture (SNJV) Project Task Manager Mark Burmeister had high words of praise for everyone involved from both the SNJV and NSTec teams. “The experience and skill of the operators working the Hydraulic Shears and the front loader made taking down the building and removing the waste look easy,” said Burmeister.

As if that were not enough, team members also successfully packaged and shipped waste oil containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and low-level radionuclides to the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) incinerator operating at the U.S. Department of Energy’s facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The bottom line is that effective planning, teamwork and communication all ensured that Super Kukla decontamination and decommissioning is ahead of schedule and under budget. Field work was completed in March and the final closure report is due to the State of Nevada in September 2007.



The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) became law on October 11, 1976 to become effective on January 1, 1977, except Section 4 (f) which took effect two years later. The Act authorized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to secure information on all new and existing chemical substances, as well as to control any of the substances that were determined to cause unreasonable risk to public health or the environment. Congress later added additional titles to the Act, with this original part designated as Title I - Control of Hazardous Substances. For more information on TSCA [click here for the EPA website.](#)

Nevada Test Site Public Tours 2007 Schedule

May 30, 2007

June 21, 2007

July 11, 2007

August 22, 2007

September 18, 2007

October 23, 2007

November 20, 2007

December 20, 2007



Radioactive Waste
Management Complex



Sedan Crater



Railroad 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 Radioactive Waste Management Complex. The tour covers approximately 250 miles. Call (702) 295-0944 for more information.



Questions should be directed to:
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