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Nevada Site Office Environmental Management

# EM NEWS FLASH

## New RCRA Disposal Cell is Up and Running

In December 2010, a new state-of-the-art disposal cell was completed at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) under budget and ahead of schedule. This excavated unit, permitted under the requirements of the *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)*, received its first mixed low-level radioactive waste package on January 26, 2011.

The opening of the facility was much anticipated for a number of waste generators throughout the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Complex seeking permanent disposal for their [mixed waste](#), much of which was generated through environmental cleanup activities.

### Dedication Ceremony

To commemorate the completion of the new mixed waste disposal unit (MWDU) at the NNSS, the Nevada Site Office held a dedication ceremony on January 26, 2011, at the Area 5 Radioactive Waste Management Site (RWMS).

The event began with a private morning ceremony at the MWDU, where a small group of attendees observed tribal representative, Richard Arnold of the Southern Paiute Nation, perform a traditional Indian blessing. The group then



**Christine Gelles, Director of DOE Disposal Operations, speaks at the dedication ceremony.**

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Located at the NNSS Area 5 Radioactive Waste Management Site, the 150 feet wide by 300 feet long by 20 feet deep unit is one of few RCRA-permitted facilities in the nation. Under RCRA, the cell is permitted to accept a “mix” of both radioactive waste and hazardous material, which can include debris, soil, trash, equipment, tools and protective clothing.

Apart from its unique purpose as a “mixed waste” facility (Area 5 typically disposes low-level waste), the new cell comes with a special design feature as well. “The facility,” as described by Federal Project Director Frank DiSanza “is lined with a five-layer *geoliner* made of plastic and an earthen-like material that will absorb and move soil moisture into a leachate collection tank.” According to DiSanza, “the cell is very well engineered.”

The State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection issued the final permit that authorizes the operation of the new mixed waste disposal unit, which replaces a cell that closed at the end of November 2010. Prior to issuing the permit, the State conducted a rigorous design review, which involved several design iterations, and performed multiple inspections during construction.

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watched as workers placed the first mixed waste package in the disposal unit.

Following the private ceremony, the group joined a larger audience at the Area 5 RWMS operations building for a series of dedication speeches to recognize the federal employees, contractors, and subcontractors who contributed to the project's success. Representatives from the Management and Operating contractor for the NNSS, National Security Technologies, Inc., and subcontractor, Andrews Engineering, were acknowledged for their stellar performance during the design, permitting, and construction phases.

The Director of Disposal Operations at DOE Environmental Management Headquarters, Christine Gelles, described the MWDU opening as "a culmination of five years of careful planning." She then went on to praise the NNSS for its support of Complex-wide cleanup efforts, calling the site a "key element to our (DOE's) continued progress."

The celebration included a barbecue lunch and guided tours of the Area 5 RWMS.

Built to hold approximately 25,000 cubic meters of waste, "the facility provides a sound, safe disposal option for generators who meet the NNSS' strict waste acceptance criteria," commented DiSanza. "Working with the generators," he added, "the NNSS is able to perform an important function for ongoing cleanup efforts at the NNSS and across the DOE Complex."



**During construction, workers cover the MWDU with a five-layer geoliner.**



**Workers test the leachate collection system.**



**Workers place the first container of mixed low-level waste in the new MWDU.**

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