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Nevada Site Office Environmental Management

EM NEWS FLASH

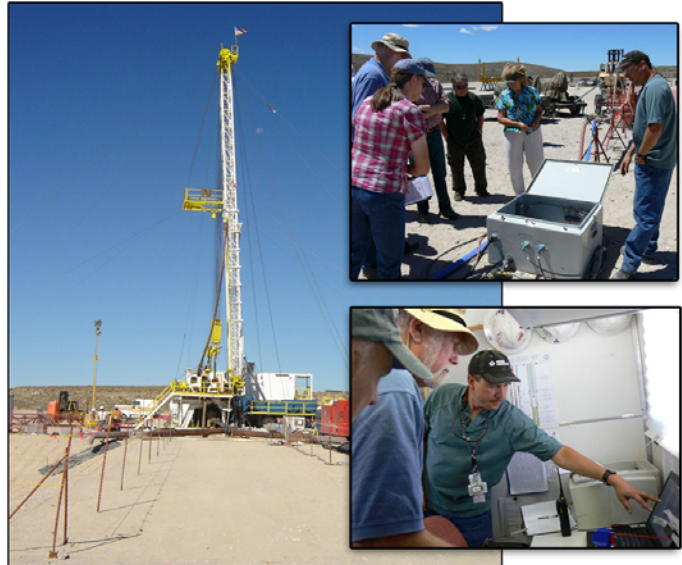
Recent Tour Brings Community Members and the NNSS Groundwater Program Together!

Groundwater was the focus of a special tour that took place on July 19, 2011 at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site). The small tour group, composed mainly of members of the public, got an up-close look at the extensive work that goes into the well operations, groundwater sampling, and monitoring programs at the site. These activities are helping scientists better understand the movement of contamination resulting from historic underground nuclear tests.

“This was an opportunity for some citizens to see our sampling programs in action,” said Federal Sub-Project Director and tour participant, Bill Wilborn of the U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office. “These folks expressed interest in learning more about our groundwater programs, and we were happy to show them how they work and answer their questions.”

A major part of the tour was visiting a well that supports [NNSS' Underground Test Area](#) (UGTA) activities. Tour participants got a detailed overview of the well development and testing work that is presently underway at the well site, located on the northwestern portion of the NNSS known as Pahute Mesa. Well development refers to a cleaning-up phase in which cuttings, soap, and other drilling remnants are purged after drilling in preparation for the well testing phase, which involves the collection of raw data, such as water chemistry, geologic properties, pressure rates, etc.

“It was a spectacular opportunity to learn about these activities in person,” said Clark County representative and tour member, Phil Klevorick. “It was quite beneficial having knowledgeable people right there to answer questions,” he added. Klevorick serves as a Clark County liaison for the [Nevada Site Specific Advisory Board](#) (NSSAB), which is a group of volunteers from the community who regularly provide the Nevada Site Office recommendations on NNSS cleanup



Tour participants visited UGTA well ER-20-8 (photos *above-right* show recent tour activities; photo *above-left* shows 2009 drilling campaign) to learn how samples and various measurements are extracted from the well. The Nevada Site Office has constructed a wide network of UGTA wells, some of which are drilled to 4,000 feet deep, to collect data that becomes the building blocks for detailed three-dimensional computer models. These models help scientists forecast where contaminants are present in groundwater, what direction contaminants are moving, and how quickly.

activities. In addition to Klevorick, NSSAB liaisons from Nye County, the State of Nevada Department of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. National Park Service, as well as six members of communities near the NNSA participated in the nearly five-hour tour.



Groundwater specialist tests and seals RREMP well samples prior to transport.

The tour group made an additional stop at a groundwater sampling well that serves the NNSA [Routine Radiological Environmental Monitoring Program](#) (RREMP). Tour participants watched as groundwater experts demonstrated how samples are collected and processed before being sent to an independent laboratory for analysis. This RREMP well is one of more than 60 water locations routinely sampled on and surrounding the NNSA.

To learn more about Nevada Site Office groundwater programs and/or to view public site tour schedules, please visit www.nv.energy.gov.

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