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Nevada Site Office Environmental Management

# EM NEWS FLASH

## Safety Comes First for NNSS Demolition Projects

For over two years, the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) has been instrumental in accelerating project schedules, increasing the scope of work, and expanding training for workers at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site).

While safety is considered the number one priority for all work conducted at NNSS sites, specific site hazards call for specific training. This was no exception for the some 30 additional workers that were brought in with Recovery Act funds to perform demolition and debris removal at the historic Reactor Maintenance, Assembly, and Disassembly (R-MAD) and Pluto buildings.

Demolition crews with the subcontractor, DEMCO, who are highly experienced with safety issues associated with demolishing structures (e.g., falling debris, dust, etc), were required to receive special training in radiation and beryllium safety, as these contaminants had been identified at the R-MAD and Pluto facilities.

Crews were also instructed on the Nevada Site Office integrated safety approach, which is a framework for analyzing project-specific risks and tailoring work controls to those identified risks.

“Simply stated, there is no short cut to safety at the NNSS,” explained Deputy Federal Project Director, Rob Boehlecke. “Even though we are dealing with very experienced subcontractors, we always take the extra time to make sure that all safety precautions have been addressed.”



*Crews perform demolition of the R-MAD facility. R-MAD is one of several NNSS facilities which supported the nuclear rocket program that ended in 1973.*

In addition to taking extra training, demolition crews gained daily experience with the protocols for working in a radiological facility, according to National Security Technologies (NSTec) subcontract technical representative, Reed Poderis. “Working at a radiological site adds another layer of safety to field operations.” Given these additional safety considerations, Poderis explained, the subcontractor still managed to work approximately 35,000 hours between the two sites with “no recordable\* injuries and only two minor first aid cases.”

More than \$8 million in Recovery Act funding went toward the demolition of the R-MAD and Pluto facilities, both of which played a major role in the Nation’s past nuclear research programs. Work at R-MAD was completed in July 2010, and demolition activities at Pluto ended in February of this year. The combined square footage of these facilities was 53,000 square feet.

The Office of [Environmental Management](#) at the Nevada Site Office was granted more than \$40 million in 2009 and 2010 to accelerate cleanup at sites on the NNSS and expand waste management operations. Approximately 3,000 soil, industrial, and groundwater sites were contaminated as a result of historic nuclear research and testing at the NNSS. Recovery Act funding has expedited planned projects at some of these locations to help shrink the total area identified for cleanup.

\***Recordable** injuries refer to work-related injuries or illnesses that require medical treatment beyond first aid. These injuries, as required by OSHA (*Occupational Safety and Health Act*), must be formally recorded.

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