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DOE News Release

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Hanford Reaches Recovery Act Goal for Waste Cleanup Ahead of Schedule

Workers Shipped 1,800 Cubic Meters for Treatment and Disposal

RICHLAND, Wash. – Today, the Department of Energy Hanford Site announced it reached a cleanup goal more than two months ahead of schedule at the Hanford Site in southeast Washington State.

Supported by funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, workers retrieved containers of contaminated material from storage buildings and underground storage trenches and prepared them for treatment and disposal. Most of the containers had been in storage since the Cold War, when Hanford produced plutonium for the nuclear arms race.

DOE and contractor CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CH2M HILL) workers have surpassed a performance goal of shipping 1,800 cubic meters of waste to treatment facilities by September 30, 2011. The volume of material is equivalent to approximately 9,000 55-gallon drums. Once treated, the waste is disposed in lined trenches at Hanford or in accordance with permit requirements at the treatment facilities.

The material is called mixed, low-level waste because it contains both hazardous chemicals and radioactive material. The waste consists of contaminated debris, equipment, tools, and used protective clothing. Some of it was stored in large boxes in trenches and covered with soil in the 1970s and 1980s.

“Thanks to Recovery Act funding, we were able to continue cleanup of this hazardous and radioactive waste,” said J.D. Dowell, Assistant Manager for the Central Plateau, DOE Richland Operations Office. “The funding also allowed us to develop and finalize methods for transporting and treating large containers of waste. Shipping the waste in large containers is more efficient and is significantly cheaper than breaking the waste down into smaller containers for shipment.”

“By taking care of this waste now, we can save on future storage and surveillance costs, and we completed the work at today’s prices instead of paying higher costs for cleanup later,” Dowell said.

“I am proud to say that all of this work was completed safely and compliantly and is a testament to the talent and dedication of our Waste and Fuels Management Project team,” said Ty Blackford, CH2M HILL Vice President of the Waste and Fuels Management Project.

(more)

The shipping milestone is one of five DOE goals for cleanup of solid, radioactive waste using Recovery Act funding at the Hanford Site by the end of September. CH2M HILL has met three of the five goals to date.

Goal completed in March 2011

- ✓ Retrieve 50 cubic meters of waste, known as remote-handled, transuranic (TRU) waste, that must be handled remotely due to higher levels of radiation. The waste will eventually be shipped to a repository for TRU waste in New Mexico, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
    - 84 cubic meters retrieved through July 15

Goal completed in May 2011

- ✓ Repackage 850 cubic meters of radioactive waste that may be handled by workers, also known as contact-handled TRU waste, for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
    - 1,007 cubic meters repackaged through July 15

Goal completed in July 2011 (announced today)

- ✓ Ship 1,800 cubic meters of mixed, low-level waste for treatment
    - 1,817 cubic meters shipped through July 15

Goals in progress

- □ Ship 2,000 cubic meters of contact-handled TRU waste off the Hanford Site (either directly to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant or to DOE's Idaho Site for compaction and subsequent shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant)
    - 1,875 cubic meters shipped through July 15
- □ Retrieve 2,500 cubic meters of solid waste from underground storage trenches
    - 1,655 cubic meters retrieved through July 15

Note: Video footage of the activity is available on the Hanford Site YouTube channel: http://ow.ly/5ND7D

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