



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

**Richland Operations
Office**

DOE News Release

Media Contact:

Cameron Salony, DOE
509-376-0402, Cameron.Salony@rl.doe.gov
Dee Millikin, CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company
509-376-1297, Dee.Millikin@rl.gov

For Immediate Release:

October 25, 2012

One of the Largest Pieces of Processing Equipment Removed from Plutonium Finishing Plant

Worker involvement led to safe completion of high-hazard work

Note: Photos are available on Hanford's website at <http://ow.ly/eLtw>

RICHLAND, WASH. – U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) contractor CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CH2M HILL) announced today the successful removal of one of the largest, most complex pieces of equipment from the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) at the Hanford Site in southeast Washington State.

This week, CH2M HILL removed a 10-ton, two-story piece of contaminated equipment from the facility. The equipment, called a glovebox, was used in the 1960s to store plutonium.

As a contractor for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), CH2M HILL is preparing the PFP, the most complex and hazardous facility at Hanford, for eventual demolition. From 1949-1989, the PFP produced plutonium oxides and metals. Hanford produced nearly two-thirds of the plutonium used in the country's nuclear weapons program. With the last of that material removed in November 2009, work is focused on decontaminating and decommissioning hundreds of pieces of equipment and preparing the PFP complex for demolition.

“This is one of the most complex gloveboxes we have worked on to date. It took a lot of preparation and a dedicated support team to safely execute the work. The PFP work teams are very disciplined and exceptional in accomplishing this high risk work safely and in a timely matter,” said Larry Romine the DOE Federal Project Director of PFP.

Gloveboxes are large, sealed, stainless steel pieces of equipment – ranging in size with the smallest starting at several cubic feet. During the plutonium production era beginning in the 1940s, protective gloves attached to ports in the glovebox walls allowed workers to safely handle materials for plutonium production and processing.

For even the most standard glovebox, the removal is very complex. Removal of this large glovebox posed a greater challenge due to its location within the facility, the size, the contamination and the equipment needed to safely execute the work.

CH2M HILL engaged workers in the work process as it was planned.

“The crews came up with several innovations to prepare for this high hazard work including a full-scale mockup box, which enabled workers to practice with the tools and techniques to ensure the work was deployed right the first time, protecting our workers and saving time and money,” said Jerry Long CH2M HILL Vice President of the PFP Closure Project.

During the removal process, workers isolated the glovebox from electrical and ventilations system and decontaminated it to the extent possible. It was disassembled in order to get it out of the facility.

The glovebox will be taken apart at Perma-Fix Northwest in Richland. The most hazardous pieces of the glovebox will then be shipped for disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, N.M., and parts containing only low-level contamination will be disposed at Hanford’s Environmental Disposal Facility located at the center of the site.

CH2M HILL plans to remove a total of 232 gloveboxes from the PFP complex; so far workers have removed 177 gloveboxes, or 76 percent.

###