



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
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Richland Operations
Office

CH2MHILL
Plateau Remediation Company

Joint DOE-CH2M News Release

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**WORKERS REMOVE LAST PENCIL TANK FROM KEY AREA OF HANFORD'S
PLUTONIUM FINISHING PLANT**

Removal of contaminated pencil tanks brings facility one step closer toward demolition

RICHLAND, Wash. – More than 50 pencil tank assemblies – some two stories tall – contaminated with chemical and radiological hazards are now gone from Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant. The tanks, called "pencil tanks" due to their long and narrow shape, reclaimed plutonium from scrap metal during Hanford's production days. Removing those tanks is a critical step toward demolition of the Plutonium Finishing Plant.

"The safe removal of the pencil tanks is important progress in cleaning out and demolishing the Plutonium Finishing Plant, which reduces risk on the Hanford Site," said Tom Teynor, Federal Project Director for the Plutonium Finishing Plant. "We have a deadline of cleaning out and demolishing all of the buildings that make up the Plutonium Finishing Plant by the end of September 2016."

Department of Energy contractor CH2M began removing the pencil tank assemblies in 2008. The slender tanks range in size from 3 feet to 22 feet long and are pointed at the end to prevent the buildup of plutonium and a criticality from occurring when the plant was producing plutonium during the Cold War.

The tanks were arranged vertically on walls inside a concrete canyon located in the Plutonium Reclamation Facility, adjacent to the Plutonium Finishing Plant. To move the pencil tanks inside the highly contaminated canyon, crews used a remotely operated crane which eliminated the risk of exposing workers to high levels of radiation and minimizes the need for manned entries in the canyon.

Workers used the crane to move a pencil tank from its operational position along the interior wall of the canyon wall to a glove box in a maintenance cell of the facility where workers in protective equipment manually cut the tank up into sections (units) and prepared it for disposal. Size-reduced pencil tank components were then transferred through a specially-designed port in the canyon into sealed waste containers for transportation and disposal at an approved treatment and disposal facility. There were 52 total pencil tank assemblies, comprised of 196 pencil tank units.

"The talented crews worked safely and compliantly removing these pencil tanks," said Mike Swartz, Vice President of the Plutonium Finishing Plant Closure Project. "Completing this task allows us to move into other areas of the facility that we need to prepare for demolition."

With pencil tanks now gone from the Plutonium Reclamation Facility, workers will shift focus to cleaning out the Plutonium Reclamation Facility canyon and removing sections of contaminated ventilation ducting and piping to prepare the Plutonium Finishing Plant for demolition.

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The Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office is responsible for several major cleanup projects on the Hanford Site, including cleanout and demolition of the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, demolition of excess facilities, excavation of contaminated soil and solid waste, and treatment of contaminated groundwater, as well as Hanford Site infrastructure. The office oversees approximately \$1 billion in annual funding for Hanford Site work that is conducted by a federal and contractor workforce of approximately 4,300 personnel. Visit www.hanford.gov.

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