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DOE

## **HANFORD URANIUM SHIPPED TO UNITED KINGDOM**

Hanford's final shipment of surplus uranium billets has left the Department of Energy's 560- square-mile site in southeast Washington, bound for Sellafield, England.

A total of 706 metric tons has been removed since the shipments started in May 1996. The uranium was shipped to British Nuclear Fuels Limited facilities in Sellafield, where it will be manufactured into reactor fuel. The shipments are governed under an existing agreement between the two countries. An environmental assessment on highway transportation of the uranium from Hanford to the Port of Seattle was approved, with public comment, prior to the start of shipments. The shipments do not present a risk to the public or the environment.

Removal of the unirradiated uranium reduced the on-site uranium by 26 percent and frees Hanford warehouse space to allow additional facilities to be cleaned up in preparation for deactivation and decommissioning.

"We've been attempting to dispose of the surplus uranium for years," said Jim Mecca, manager of Transition Programs for DOE's Richland Operations Office. "The uranium was originally brought to Hanford from Fernald, Ohio, for manufacture into fuel for the N- Reactor," he said. "We've had it in storage since the reactor stopped operating in 1987, taking up space in our 300 Area facilities. Removing it from the site allows us to consolidate and relocate our remaining fuel materials so that we can clean up the buildings, turn out the lights, lock the doors and prepare those facilities for deactivation and decommissioning. That will save taxpayer dollars and take us another step forward in the cleanup of Hanford."

"In addition," Mecca added, "it's important to note that we're dispositioning surplus material for beneficial use rather than burying it on-site as waste."

A billet is a 420-pound circular cylinder of metallic uranium, seven inches in diameter and 19 inches long. There were 3,724 billets shipped, according to Ivan Metcalf, manager of fuel supply shutdown facilities for B&W Hanford Company, the new Hanford subcontractor managing the transition of the aging Hanford facilities.

The final shipment of 574 billets was packed in standard commercial 16-gallon drums, placed on nine drum pallets and loaded into standard International Shipping Organization containers for transport.

Most of the uranium shipped to the United Kingdom was slightly enriched. That is, the uranium 235 content was slightly higher than that which occurs in the natural state. Uranium usually is enriched before use as a reactor fuel. The remainder of the billets was comprised of natural uranium, with the same enrichment level as it was mined from the ground.

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