

# DOE NEWS

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## **DEPUTY ENERGY SECRETARY CLAY SELL ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF KEY TRI-PARTY AGREEMENT CLEANUP WORK AT HANFORD**

**Milestones include the retrieval of buried waste and  
expansive upgrades to the Hanford double-shell tank system**

Deputy Secretary of Energy Clay Sell today announced that workers have completed work on two major Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) cleanup milestones, one more than five months early, at the DOE's Hanford Site in Southeastern Washington State.

The two milestones include:

- Retrieval of a significant portion of suspect transuranic (plutonium) waste from Hanford's low-level burial grounds five months ahead of schedule; and
- the completion of an 11-year effort to upgrade infrastructure of the double-shell tanks system, the largest mixed-waste tank storage complex in the United States, at a cost savings of approximately \$30 million dollars.

"I am honored to be able to announce the completion of two important TPA milestones during my first visit to the Hanford Site," said Deputy Secretary Clay Sell. "In completing this work, we are not only meeting our commitments, but also reducing risk to our workers and public and protecting the Columbia River, the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest."

In October 2003, DOE's contractor, Fluor Hanford, began retrieving drums and boxes of waste from the low-level burial grounds. The waste is in the form of contaminated debris, tools, clothing, and other materials generated in the 1970s and 1980s. The waste containers were stacked on asphalt pads, covered with plywood, draped with tarps, and then covered with dirt. Once the drums are retrieved, workers determine whether they contain low-level waste, which can be disposed of in a lined, permitted facility on the Hanford Site, or transuranic waste, which is then prepared for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. Hanford has sent more than 5,700 drums of waste to WIPP so far.

The TPA, an agreement between DOE, Washington State and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, calls for DOE to complete retrieval of all contact-handled suspect transuranic waste (expected to be the equivalent of 75,000 drums) by the end of 2010 with interim milestones each year. DOE met this year's milestone five months ahead of schedule by retrieving more than 13,500 drums by late July.

"This is a critical risk-reduction milestone met well ahead of schedule," said Keith A. Klein, manager of DOE's Richland Operations Office. "Pulling these containers out of the trenches eliminates the threat they pose to the surrounding environment and allows us to make an increasing number of shipments of transuranic waste out of Washington State for disposal."

Completion of the second milestone is a significant accomplishment for Hanford's tank waste cleanup project. Hanford's 177 large underground tanks contain over 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemical wastes. DOE's tank farms contractor CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. (CH2M HILL) is transferring waste from the older 149 single-shell tanks to the newer 28 double-shell tanks, each with a capacity of over one million gallons. The infrastructure upgrades to the double-shell tanks are key to the retrieval and transfer of waste.

"Working with aging and contaminated equipment in the tank farms is a real challenge. Good planning, excellent teamwork and innovative methods resulted in savings of over \$30 million dollars and the safe completion of this project," said Roy Schepens, manager of the DOE's Office of River Protection. "Today, the double-shell tank system meets state and federal environmental laws and is ready to deliver high-level and low-activity waste to Hanford's Vitrification plant."

CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. workers recently completed the final upgrades to the double shell tank system, finishing an 11 year effort that included 40 subordinate milestones and five major construction projects.

In all, CH2M HILL workers installed 14 miles of new transfer lines between the sites 200 East and West areas where the tank farms are located, upgraded 35 tank-farm pits, added 14 transfer lines with more than 12,000 feet of transfer piping between tanks, removed 13 noncompliant cleanout boxes from transfer lines, and installed 6,600 feet of new transfer lines to deliver waste to the Vitrification plant.

When construction and testing of the Vitrification plant are complete, liquid and sludge waste will be pumped from the double-shell tanks to the plant and immobilized in sturdy glass. The immobilized low-activity waste will be landfill disposed on the Hanford Site while the immobilized high-level will eventually be shipped to the national repository.

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