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DOE Meets TPA Milestone for H Area

Washington Closure Hanford begins work on burial grounds, waste sites

RICHLAND, Wash.— The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has reached a Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) milestone for work in the H Reactor area more than three months early at DOE's 586-square-mile Hanford Site in southeastern Washington state.

DOE's contractor for the River Corridor Closure Project, Washington Closure Hanford this week began cleanup of burial grounds and waste sites near Hanford's H Reactor well in advance of the TPA milestone that called for work to begin by October 31, 2008.

"As we continue to make progress in the River Corridor, it's important to not only meet but surpass our milestones," said Mark French, DOE's federal project director for the River Corridor. "As always our goal is to safely and properly manage the work we have ahead of us."

The burial grounds and waste sites are contaminated with various materials related to H Reactor operations and contain an estimated 276,000 tons of waste. The work is expected to be completed by March 2011. In addition to contaminated soils, the burial grounds are expected to yield reactor hardware, process equipment and waste, laboratory equipment and waste, metallic waste, miscellaneous construction and demolition debris – all radioactively contaminated – along with hazardous materials, which may include lead, asbestos, mercury, PCBs and acids.

"Earlier this week, we began removing the overburden, or the clean dirt, which covers the 118-H-1 Burial Ground – one of 10 waste sites to be cleaned up at H Area," said Mark Buckmaster, 100 H Area Project Manager for Washington Closure Hanford.

Some of the materials are expected to be found in drums and other containers. Project staff will characterize any unexpected solids or liquids they encounter to ensure the waste is safely and properly packaged and transported for treatment and disposal. Most

materials are expected to go to Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility for final disposal. However, the majority of the material is expected to be found in unlined disposal trenches that were used from the time of H Reactor's construction in 1948 through its closure in 1965, and may yield unique materials not found at other cleanup sites.

H Reactor was one of nine plutonium production reactors that operated on the site from 1944-1989. In addition to producing plutonium, H Reactor also was used to test new processes and equipment.

"We're ready to safely handle any anomalies we may encounter or items not on existing inventory logs," said Buckmaster. "A thorough record of what was buried does not exist," he said.

Washington Closure awarded a \$9 million subcontract in April to Federal Engineers & Constructors of Richland to perform the remediation work.

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