

## Pumping Resumes in Hanford Tanks

RICHLAND, Wash., February 16, 1996 -- Rapid procurement of new flammable gas monitors has allowed the resumption of pumping highly radioactive liquid waste from some of Hanford's waste storage tanks.

Pumping activity in Hanford's tanks was halted late last year when controls were placed on the tanks because of concerns over the potential for some tank waste to trap flammable gases. It was decided at that time that pumping would be allowed to resume only when flammable gas monitors were in place.

What is commonly referred to as saltwell pumping uses an above-ground pump to remove liquids from the salts and sludges at the bottom of the aging storage tanks. The pumping reduces the risk posed by the older, single-shell tanks which have a history of leaking. As the liquids are pumped they are sent to newer, double-shell tanks where they are safely stored until they can be prepared for disposal.

Six monitors were purchased from Belhaven Group of Kennewick. "Everyone involved at Belhaven, Westinghouse and ICF Kaiser turned a difficult project into a success," said Tim Morton, manager of Interim Stabilization Projects for Tank Waste Remediation System. "We recognized the need for this monitor in mid-December but there was nothing in the commercial sector that would meet our needs so we placed the order for fabrication of these monitors with our procurement staff. They, in turn, contacted Belhaven which designed, built and tested the units, then delivered them to us for final testing and installation. The entire process, including procurement, took just six weeks," said Morton.

The monitors cost approximately \$16,000 each, much less than the cost of earlier monitors manufactured at Hanford. Morton said earlier units monitored only hydrogen while the new equipment can detect the full range of flammable gases. Morton says the new units are more versatile and easier to maintain than the old units and because they are portable, can be moved from tank to tank to support a variety of work requirements. Four of the six units are scheduled for use in the field while one is being used for training and one is held as a spare.

The monitors are inter-connected with the pumps so pumping will be shut down immediately if the monitors detect flammable gases above a pre-set limit. The monitors will warn of the presence of the gases at levels well below the danger limit.

Pumping with the aid of the new monitors resumed in a tank known as T-107 last week. The tank is a 500,000 gallon, single-shell tank built during World War II. Pumping of the tank was nearly completed last year when the order was given to shut down all saltwell pumping due to the flammable gas concerns. Only about five thousand gallons remain to be pumped from the tank.

Pumping is to begin in three other tanks in the next few weeks. Those tanks are T-104, S-108 and S-110. The pumping is required under the Tri-Party Agreement which calls for liquids to be pumped from all of the single shell tanks by the end of FY 2000. Of Hanford's 149 single-shell tanks, 34 still hold pumpable liquids. The total volume remaining to be pumped from all of the single shell tanks is estimated at about 5 million gallons.

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