



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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INDEPENDENT INSPECTION FINDS HANFORD BERYLLIUM PROGRAM IMPROVED, BUT MORE WORK NEEDED

Richland, WA – The Department of Energy today released findings and recommendations from an independent inspection of the Hanford Site Chronic Beryllium Disease Prevention Program (CBDPP) during an open meeting in Richland, Washington. DOE's Office of Health, Safety and Security completed the inspection on the Hanford site at the request of Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, Dr. Inés Triay. The team evaluated current practices for protecting workers against beryllium hazards, along with the beryllium medical surveillance programs at the site. While the team found Hanford's new, coordinated site-wide program to be an improvement, they also noted the program could have been implemented more quickly.

“The Department takes very seriously the health and safety of our employees and we recognize this is an important matter requiring emphasis and vigilance to improve. That is why I requested this independent review of our safety programs,” said Dr. Triay. “We appreciate the review team's recommendations and have already begun working to improve the program to ensure long-term safety of our workers.”

The new Hanford Site CBDPP was recently developed by beryllium affected workers, Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council (HAMTC) representatives and contractor personnel in order to provide a consistent approach. Previously, each contractor had addressed beryllium risks independently, but the new CBDPP provides a common set of safety requirements for the four Office of Environmental Management operating contractors at Hanford and the site's medical contractor.

The review team recognized the development of the new site-wide CBDPP as a positive step in providing workers with consistent training and controls. However, the inspection also found that implementation of the new program was not timely and identified a number of weaknesses. The most significant weaknesses were evident in the ongoing effort to identify potential sources of exposure due to legacy operations and in the analysis of newly-identified cases of sensitization or chronic beryllium disease to identify workers at risk for exposure, understand beryllium health risks and identify actions to improve the CBDPP. In addition, the

team identified a need to improve communications throughout the site and with stakeholder groups regarding the beryllium program. Correction of these weaknesses, the report found, will be essential in providing the foundation for a sound program.

In order to begin improving the beryllium program as soon as possible, the Office of River Protection and the Richland Operations Office have already acted on preliminary findings from the reviews and sent letters directing their contractors to take steps to address the findings. In May, Richland Operations Office Manager Dave Brockman held several staff and stakeholder meetings to encourage site workers to have a dialogue with their supervisors to better understand beryllium at Hanford. He stressed the importance of improving worker awareness of risks around the site. In addition, the site announced today they will be hiring additional staff to help administer and oversee the CBDPP.

“We are committed to implementing the review’s recommendations and strengthening the CBDPP to ensure that each of you has the information you need to conduct your work safely,” said Brockman in an all-staff memo. “We will support our employees and take necessary actions to ensure their safety, as they continue to support our nation in advancing cleanup of the Hanford Site,” said Dr. Triay.

The inspection team emphasized transparency and engaged representatives of local stakeholder groups, including the Hanford Advisory Board, the Beryllium Awareness Group, and the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council. At the request of the citizens groups, independent medical experts from outside DOE were included on the HSS team, as well.