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Final Low-Activity Waste Vitrification Facility melter assembly arrives at Hanford Waste Treatment Plant

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Richland, Wash. — Today, the second and final 125-ton melter assembly that will be staged in the Low-Activity Waste Vitrification (LAW) Facility arrived at the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant, also known as the Vit Plant, construction site. The assembly, carried on a 190-foot-long transporter, completed its nearly 800-mile trek from Ogden, Utah, in just four days.

The assembly started in Pendleton, Ore., this morning and arrived at the Vit Plant construction site, approximately 25 miles north of Richland, Wash., at noon. It was then offloaded and staged in the LAW Facility with the first melter assembly, which was delivered on November 5. Each assembly measures 30 feet long, 21 feet wide and 13 feet tall.

The melter assemblies were delivered using a specially configured heavy-haul transporter that can travel a maximum of 45 miles per hour. The transporter uses two tractors -- one in front to pull the trailer and one in back to push the transporter. The entire transporter, both trailers and trailer, ride on 108 tires.

To follow the melters' journeys to the Vit Plant, including interesting facts, photos and daily updates, view the LAW melter blog at www.hanfordvitplant.com/lawmelterblog/.

When operational, the melters, which are often considered the core of the vitrification process, will be used to heat the waste and glass-forming materials to 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit before the mixture is poured into stainless steel canisters for permanent storage. The Vit Plant will use four total melters: two in the LAW Facility and two in the High-Level Waste Vitrification Facility.

The assemblies are the primary components--base and walls--of the LAW melters. A single melter is composed of a melter assembly (melter base and walls); a gas barrier lid; a shield lid; a refractory brick interior; and other components that will feed, stir, and monitor the glass mixture. When complete, the LAW melters will each weigh 300 tons. They will be the world's largest waste-processing melters in operation.

Vit Plant construction is continuing to steadily progress. The LAW Facility is currently 65 percent complete, and the Vit Plant is 57 percent complete. Next month, a 60-ton overhead crane will be installed in the largest Vit Plant facility -- the Pretreatment Facility.

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Bechtel National, Inc. is designing and building the world's largest radioactive waste treatment plant for the U.S. Department of Energy at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington state. The \$12.2 billion Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP), also known as the "Vit Plant," will immobilize the radioactive liquid waste currently stored in 177 underground tanks using a process called "vitrification."

Vitrification involves blending the waste with molten glass and heating it to high temperatures. The mixture is then poured into stainless steel canisters. In this glass form, the waste is stable and impervious to the environment, and its radioactivity will dissipate over hundreds to thousands of years.

The WTP will cover 65 acres with four nuclear facilities -- Pretreatment, Low-Activity Waste Vitrification, High-Level Waste Vitrification and Analytical Laboratory-- as well as operations and maintenance buildings, utilities and office space.

Construction of the WTP began in 2001 and is now 57 percent complete. The plant will be operational in 2019.

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The melter assembly is carried on a 190-foot-long transporter. It will travel nearly 800 miles through Utah, Idaho and Oregon before arriving at the Vit Plant construction site, just north of Richland, Wash.