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Hanford Waste Treatment Plant awards large-scale testing subcontract to local engineering firm

Testing will enable project to finalize safe mixing design

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Richland, Wash. -- The Hanford Waste Treatment Plant, also known as the “Vit Plant,” awarded the subcontract for the large-scale testing platform that will be used to confirm the plant’s mixing design in the areas that require design confirmation. The subcontract to build the platform and perform the testing was awarded to EnergySolutions Federal EPC, Inc., of Richland.

“Awarding the large-scale testing subcontract is a significant milestone because it supports our commitment to ensure the plant will safely and effectively process Hanford’s radioactive and chemical waste,” Dale Knutson, federal project director, said.

The large-scale tests will generate the data that will demonstrate that the design of pulse jet mixer (PJM) systems, which were developed following years of research, development and smaller-scale testing, will perform as predicted. The tests will focus on the scale up of pulse jet mixers, which will be used to keep the radioactive waste mixed in 38 of the plant’s vessels during Vit Plant operations.

“Testing is performed to validate the safety and quality of design and construction,” Frank Russo, Vit Plant project director said. “Our large-scale testing effort will be used to confirm results of the small-scale tests of the mixing design and to identify and implement adjustments well before the Vit Plant is operational.”

“We are confident, based on the results of our small-scale testing, that the mixing design of the vessels meets the safety design basis,” Russo said. Large-scale integrated testing will allow confirmation of the design on a larger scale.”

The large-scale testing subcontract was awarded following a request for proposals and extensive review of the submitted proposals.

The test platform is being constructed with the capability to assist the Department of Energy in defining processing optimization strategies in the future.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
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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 Vit Plant 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 Vit Plant began in 2001 and is now 60 percent complete. The Vit Plant is scheduled to complete construction in 2016; reach commissioning in 2019 and achieve full operations in 2022.

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