

B Reactor project spearheaded by ER contractor

In August of last year, the Department of Energy and Bechtel Hanford's Environmental Restoration Contractor team partnered in creating a B Reactor project that is helping maintain the facility while providing a pathway into the new millennium for the world's first full-scale nuclear reactor.

"DOE deserves a lot of credit for this," said Dru Butler, Bechtel's B Reactor project task lead. "The funding we receive is really vital in allowing the restoration of the B Reactor facility and making it possible for people to come inside this historic structure."

"Bechtel has been able to take care of a lot of miscellaneous safety issues in and around the building itself," said Chris Smith, DOE project manager for both the Interim Safe Storage program and B Reactor. "They have eliminated most of the minor hazards that have hindered people's entrance into certain B Reactor rooms and have given the place a polished appearance."



Hanford Site visitors gather around a newly installed flag-pole after a dedication June 9. The flag-raising ceremony was part of a tour sponsored by the B Reactor Museum Association.

The B Reactor's roof and exterior ductwork were repaired and restrooms have been made accessible for visitors.

"Our radiological monitoring has allowed us to increase our tour access," Butler said. "The rad control methods in place have also allowed us to decrease the costs associated with visits, and we have reviewed and revised our tour-related procedures. We've repaired the building, but kept the original look and structures intact."

The ERC team's challenge during this fiscal year encompasses three major tasks for B Reactor: 1) preparing a draft document for future hazard mitigation; 2) continuing surveillance and maintenance along with minor repairs; and 3) providing tours for a variety of visitors.

The ERC team, in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency and DOE, reviewed the *Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis*, or EE/CA (see "Citizens, HAB urge DOE to 'B' active in museum effort," this page).

"The great thing about the EE/CA is that there has never been a formal written effort between the EPA, DOE and ERC on how we could potentially extend the life of the B Reactor," Smith said. "This is a document designed for public input, and it allows for a more complete idea of where we want to proceed in the future."

"This is an opportunity for us to preserve our history," said Don Eckert, Bechtel's 100 Area field supervisor. "Considering most of our work involves the decommissioning and demolition of reactors, it's rewarding to show retired workers and visitors what we've done with the B Reactor when they come on tours."

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So far, Bechtel has hosted 25 tours since last October. They have brought more than 450 people to the National Historic Engineering Landmark. Visitors have included national DOE officials, international scientists, college and high-school students and Russian officials who inspect and verify treaty requirements.

“Most might agree that the B Reactor is worth preserving for historical interpretation,” Smith said, “but the main question is, where does the funding come from? The Department of Energy’s commitment lies in cleaning up and restoring the Hanford Site. The work that will continue hazard mitigation at B Reactor falls within the scope of site cleanup. If additional non-cleanup funding is available, then we can look into furthering other museum possibilities for the B Reactor.” ♦