

K East Basin alert caused by false alarms

An emergency alert on the afternoon of Feb. 5 — declared in response to continuous-air-monitor alarms that sounded in the K East Basin — was lifted after it was confirmed that the alarms had given false indications of a radiological release. Employees in the 100K and 100N areas were required to “take cover” for a short time before it was determined by air sampling that there was no emergency.

The Hanford Emergency Operations Center was activated at 3:50 p.m. In accordance with standard emergency procedures, Benton County officials evacuated the Columbia River from the White Bluffs area to the Vernita Bridge as a precaution.

“Our workers are trained in emergency procedures and urged to be conservative in their judgment when public and worker safety is at stake,” said Keith Klein, manager of the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office. “In this case, false alarms led to a declaration of an alert emergency. When an alert emergency is declared, emergency procedures require evacuation along parts of the Columbia River. We apologize for any inconvenience this caused, but praise our workers for making safety their first priority.”

The emergency declaration and take-cover action were lifted at about 5 p.m., after both Hanford Site radiation-monitoring personnel and representatives of the Washington State Department of Health had taken samples and found no contamination or elevated levels of radioactivity.

Spent Nuclear Fuel Project personnel are investigating to determine why the continuous air monitors gave false indications. ■