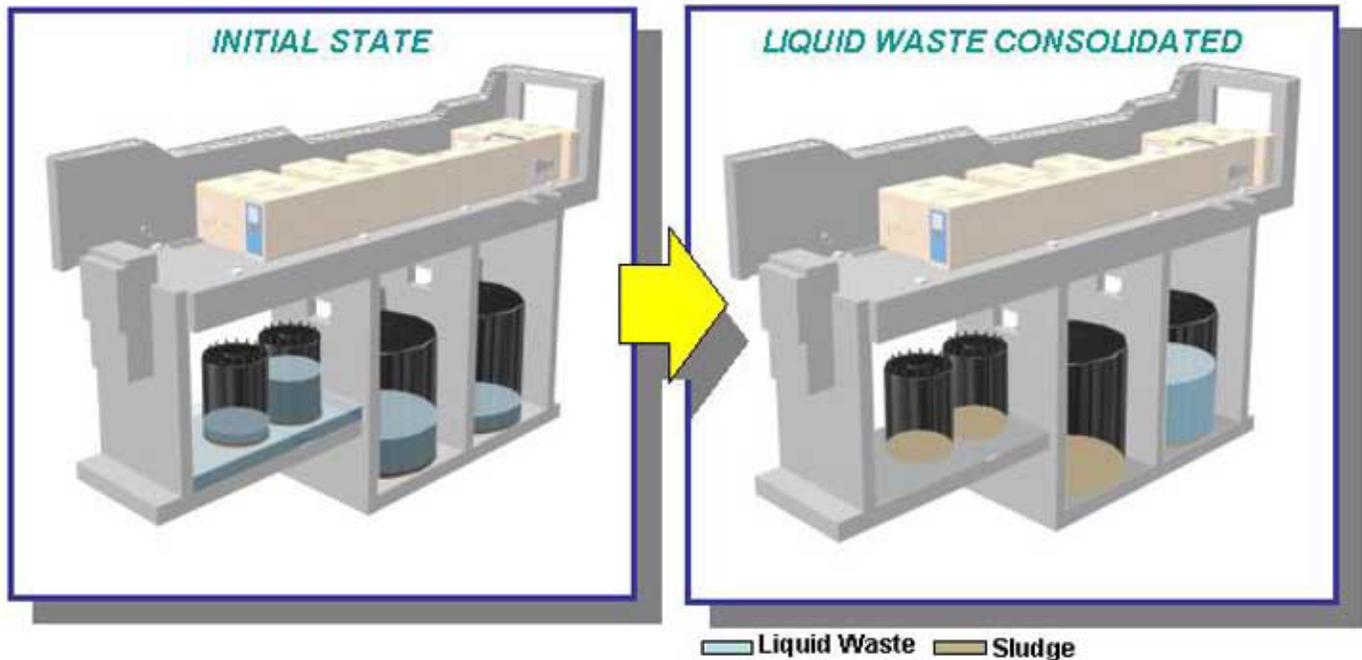


244 AR Vault Stabilization



Consolidating about 19,000 gallons of waste from four tanks and a drainage sump into one tank is the first step toward reducing the risk posed by waste in the 244-AR Vault in the 200 East Area.

Cleanup of historic waste facility begins

Crews have started pumping operations to clean up a facility that was once used to transfer waste between nuclear-materials processing facilities and large underground waste tanks at the Hanford Site.

The Department of Energy Office of River Protection and tank-cleanup contractor CH2M HILL Hanford Group are preparing to stabilize the facility, called the 244-AR Vault, while continuing cleanup efforts on Hanford's 177 large radioactive waste tanks.

The old facility once played an important role in producing nuclear materials at the Hanford Site, but it hasn't been used for some time. To ensure the vault no longer poses a threat to the environment, the public or Hanford employees, ORP and CH2M HILL are cleaning up the facility to place it in a safer condition until it can be permanently closed. Interim stabilization of the 244-AR Vault is a milestone that must be completed by Sept. 30, according to the Tri-Party Agreement.

Constructed between 1966 and 1968, the 100-foot-long, concrete-walled 244-AR Vault was used until the early 1990s to ensure the safe transfer of waste between processing facilities — specifically, the Plutonium

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Cleanup of historic waste facility begins, cont.

Uranium Extraction (PUREX) facility and B Plant — and the Hanford waste tanks. Sodium hydroxide was added to make the waste from the processing plants less acidic, so it wouldn't corrode the steel walls of the tanks.

Years of past processing history and water intrusions into the facility left 19,000 gallons of liquid in four different tanks in the facility and in a secondary containment system. The 244-AR cleanup project is focusing initially on consolidating the 19,000 gallons of liquid radioactive waste in the four tanks and in a drainage sump into one tank. To install pumping systems needed to complete this task, a remotely operated plasma-arc cutting torch was used to cut holes in the top of the storage tanks under the vault's concrete floor.

After the liquid waste is consolidated, sampling will be done to verify compatibility with Hanford's double-shell tanks before the 244-AR waste is transferred to Hanford's underground storage tanks. Transferring the liquid waste out of the 244-AR facility is the first step in reducing the risk the facility currently poses to the environment. A final determination is yet to be made on plans for closing the facility. ■