

DOE-RL, contractors celebrate 100th successful IAEA inspection at the Plutonium Finishing Plant

On April 4, the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office, Hanford contractor personnel and representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency celebrated the 100th successful IAEA inspection at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant.

The impetus for IAEA inspections in the United States originated from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that the U.S. signed in 1970. Under the treaty, countries possessing nuclear weapons were not required to place nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards, but were encouraged to submit to such safeguards on a voluntary basis.

On Sept. 27, 1993, President Clinton offered to submit excess U.S. fissile material to IAEA inspection to promote international confidence in the irreversibility of nuclear arms reductions.

After the National Security Council approved the Department of Energy implementation recommendations, DOE-RL and its contractors worked to isolate the excess plutonium-bearing material needed for the required initial verification of the inventory with the IAEA. This verification was successfully completed in December 1994, and in July 1995 additional material was added to the IAEA-safeguarded inventory. The PFP is one of four direct-use nuclear facilities inspected under the U.S.-IAEA Agreement, which became effective in 1980.

What has followed has been 10 years of teaming between Hanford and the IAEA to further ensure "transparency" of U.S. nuclear material through monthly inventory inspections, safeguards reporting, and analytical verification regimens.

In 1957, the IAEA was established as a specialized United Nations agency, whose purpose was to oversee sharing of peaceful nuclear technology. Its present membership includes 132 nations. An international staff headquartered in Vienna, Austria, manages the agency. The IAEA uses its inspection system to verify that countries comply with their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other non-proliferation agreements — to use nuclear material and facilities only for peaceful purposes.

A Hanford team comprising representatives of DOE-RL, Fluor Hanford, Day and Zimmermann Protection Technology Hanford and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has worked diligently over the past 10 years to ensure the success of the IAEA program at Hanford. Key participants on the Hanford team include the following: Scott Sax of Westing-house Safety Management Solutions; Dean Bartlett, George Westsik, Rick Wilbanks, Bill White and Marlis Perry of Fluor Hanford; Steven Schlegel, Larry McRae, Mike Turner, Claire Christensen and Terri Welch of Day and Zimmermann Protection Technology Hanford; Glenn Konzek, Larry Romine and Briant Charboneau of DOE-RL; Greg Clark of Portage; and Brian Smith of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

A U.S. "thank you" is being extended to the following IAEA personnel: Ok-Seok Seo, Gabriel Bernasconi, Anita Marques Patricio, Maha Mahmoud, Pantelis Ikononou, Jean-Yves Lefebvre and Rene Lemaire (retired).

Special thanks also go to DOE Headquarters personnel: Ronald Cherry and John Murphy of the International Safeguards Division and Leigh Gunn, Yvonne Ferris and Maurice Daugherty of the Environmental Management Office of Safety, Health and Security. ■