

SNF Project begins major acceleration

Michele Gerber, *Fluor Hanford*

The Spent Nuclear Fuel Project has announced a major acceleration that will result in all spent fuel being removed from both of the K Basins by next February. The February 2004 goal completes fuel removal five months earlier than the Tri-Party Agreement commitment, that is July 31, 2004.

In addition, the SNF Project plans to finish removing sludge from the K East Basin (home to more than 90 percent of the total sludge in the K Basins) on schedule by Aug. 31, 2004, and to deactivate the K Basins on time by October 2005. The Cold Vacuum Drying Facility — the 100 K Area facility where the fuel is dried and prepared for storage — will be deactivated early, in June 2004.



Fluor Hanford's Fritz Strankman, program manager for Workforce Transition for the Spent Nuclear Fuel Project, greets visitors to the project's booth at the 2003 Health and Safety Expo earlier this month.

A 24/7 operation

To accomplish the new goal for removing fuel, this month the K East Basin and the SNF Project's Production Control Organization will begin operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the K East and K West Basin organizations will be combined. Don McBride, Fluor Hanford's current K West Basin manager, will manage the overall K Basins organization, with Tom Ruane as his deputy.

To accomplish the accelerated work, personnel will be brought into the SNF Project from CH2M Hill Hanford Group, and from the Plutonium Finishing Plant and other facilities and cleanup projects within Fluor Hanford.

Dave Van Leuven, Fluor Hanford president and chief executive officer, and Norm Boyter, vice president for the SNF Project, pledged to assist SNF employees by negotiating agreements with other cleanup projects to place these workers when SNF work declines.

Production leaps

Beginning immediately, the SNF Project expects to remove five multi-canister overpacks of fuel from the K West Basin per week, and to transfer 18 shipments per week from K East to K West via the fuel transfer system. The first sludge transfer out of the K East Basin via the sludge/water system is expected to occur this summer.

SNF Project begins major acceleration, cont.

Following the initial transfer, the project will execute two transfers per month from September 2003 through Aug. 31, 2004, when all the sludge will have been removed. Plans for the K West Basin, which contains a very small amount of sludge, are being formulated.

To equip workers and make them comfortable during the upcoming acceleration, Fred Hughes, Fluor Hanford director of SNF Operations, pledged to install cooling equipment in the K East and K West Basin annexes and inside the K East Basin, improve the operability of the fuel transfer system, reduce contamination on fuel-transfer-system casks, replace robotic Konan arms in the K West Basin with a manual fuel-loading system, install strainers and make other improvements in K West Basin equipment and load more fuel as scrap.

Van Leuven and Boyter thanked assembled SNF Project employees for their successful efforts thus far in the one-of-a-kind endeavor, noting that the project has met four of its five major goals in the past six months. "Results matter to Congress," said Van Leuven, "and results will bring us the funding we need to continue cleanup at Hanford. Fluor Hanford workers at the Spent Nuclear Fuel Project are producing results, which makes my job easier."

Boyter reiterated his "open-door" policy, and told employees that he is ready to listen to all of their recommendations for reaching the project's significant new goals. ■

SNF Project reaches milestone early

Michele Gerber, Fluor Hanford

Fluor Hanford's Spent Nuclear Fuel Project met an important Tri-Party Agreement milestone early last week when it removed more than 1,252 metric tons — equivalent to 2.76 million pounds — of fuel from the K West Basin.

The milestone was reached when multi-canister overpack No. 237 was removed and sent to the Cold Vacuum Drying Facility on May 28. The milestone's due date was May 31.

"We're heading down the final stretch of eliminating the risk posed to the Columbia River by this fuel being stored near the shoreline," said Norm Boyter, Fluor Hanford vice president for the SNF Project.

"I'm extremely proud of the Fluor Hanford workers, our Department of Energy partners and everyone else who has helped us come more than 60 percent of the way in getting all of the fuel out of the basins," Boyter said.

The SNF Project transfers spent fuel from the K East Basin into the K West Basin for processing. Thus far, most of the fuel originally in the K West Basin and more than 110 loads that have come in from the K East Basin have been removed.

Those 110 loads represent about 30 percent of the fuel stored in the K East Basin. It takes about two transfers from the K East Basin to fill one multi-canister overpack in the K West Basin.

Other accomplishments

Other recent achievements in the SNF Project include welding more than 40 MCOs in the Canister Storage Building on Hanford's central plateau. The MCO Welding Project began on schedule in February and is already more than 30 days ahead of its baseline schedule.

The SNF Project also has cleaned and removed nearly 3,000 (almost half) of the old canisters and nearly 1,000 lids (about a third) from the K West Basin. The canisters held the spent fuel while it was stored under water.

In April, the SNF Project successfully passed a readiness assessment for processing fuel scrap that has accumulated in the K West Basin since workers began removing fuel in December 2000. Scrap-processing operations will begin this summer.

The SNF Project also is finalizing efforts to start up a new sludge/water system to remove sludge from the K East Basin. This startup, though currently behind schedule, is expected in July. ■