

Hanford workers take lunchtime to improve fitness

This is another in the series of articles that will accompany the Make Your Move program and feature Hanford workers who are physically active.

Tucked in an otherwise quiet corner of T Plant, 12-18 Hanford workers spend some of their lunchtime building their strength, improving their flexibility and engaging in aerobic exercise.

These are the members of “Olds Gym,” so dubbed by Jim Dudley, a nuclear waste process operator at T Plant, who works out at lunch, lifting weights, cycling on the stationary bicycle and boxing a few rounds with the heavy bag. Why “Olds?” Well, the members reflect the demographics of the Hanford workforce and range from 37 to over 60 years of age.

The weights and exercise equipment in the room belong to the workers themselves. Dudley and his co-workers bring equipment from home or pool their personal resources to purchase equipment. Their employers and managers only provide the space for the gym — and that tends to move around in the plant. This informal exercise space has been in existence for 28 years, and through that lifetime has been housed in six different locations in T Plant.

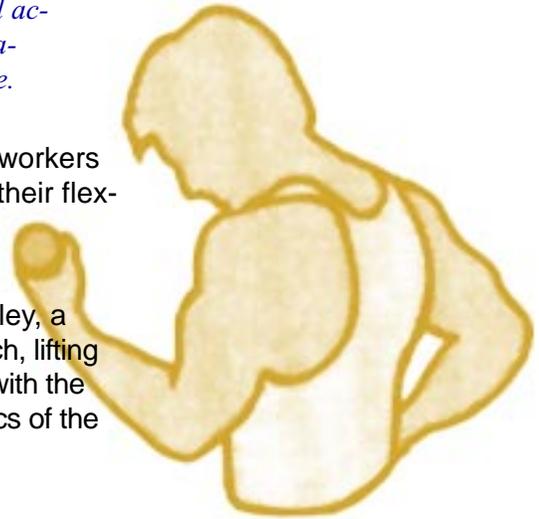
Dudley calls the current location, “Eden, because there is HVAC here.” Other locations have been in non-heated or non-air-conditioned spaces.

In addition to the well-known health benefits of exercise, these workouts help Dudley on the job. “I work on verification sampling and a lot of this work is done by hand — moving objects around — so I need to stay in shape to do the work safely and prevent injuries.”

Others agree, “There are no back problems among us here,” said Don White, a nuclear waste process operator.

Those who come here are serious about their workout, about losing weight, building stamina and strength and working out safely. There are no amenities — no music during or lattes after the exercise.

Some of those who work out are dressed in T-shirts and gym shorts; others come in comfortable work clothes. Some workers are quiet, focusing on getting the most of the 10- to 20-minute workout. Other workers pair or triple up to spot each other, count reps or joke and good-naturedly challenge one another to work a little harder.



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"I look forward to this part of the day," said Doug Mallory, a radiological control technician from CH2M HILL Hanford Group. "We encourage one another and drive each other to improve."

The camaraderie helps pave the way to greater strength and a sense of personal accomplishment.

Jim Mecure, an electrician at T Plant, began working on strength training three years ago. He started bench-pressing 150 pounds and gradually worked his way up to 275 pounds. "I am not worried about lifting on the job, I know my limits and can work safely."

Ray Dohanuik, a Fluor Hanford instrument technician and another participant in the lunchtime workouts, is a member of the World Association of Bench and Dead Lifters. Outside of work, he has competed throughout the Pacific Northwest. Dohanuik's record for bench pressing is 519 pounds in the 47-53 age category and the 220-pound weight class. Dohanuik says that he and the others participating in the workouts practice lifting safety on the job and in the gym. "The combination of the aerobic exercise and strength training helps prevent injuries and helps you lose weight." ■