

SNF Construction subproject achieves safety benchmark

Jim Bates, Fluor Federal Services

The Fluor Federal Services construction affiliates at the Spent Nuclear Fuel Project have earned a Fluor one-star award for working 500,000 work-hours since July 2001 without a lost-time accident. They achieved this recognition with an Occupational Safety and Health Administration recordable injury rate of 0.69, well below the Fluor corporate goal of 0.85.

During that time, the construction craftsmen, subcontractors, managers and support-staff employees have steadily and safely installed the equipment and systems that have made it possible to move spent nuclear fuel away from the Columbia River.

According to area construction manager Ron Kirkpatrick, the work performed during this period was extensive: fabricating and installing new technologies for completing the Cold Vacuum Drying facility, installing the fuel transfer system in the K East and K West Basins, installing the sludge/water system in K East, and completing several production improvements in K West.

The construction organization's key to success is the dedication and knowledge of its veteran workforce. Employees did much of the work on tight schedules and with many hours of overtime, while adapting to changing design requirements.



The SNF Project's fuel transfer system was installed by Fluor Federal Services employees who worked half a million safe hours.

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“The success of SNF construction safety can be attributed to bottom-to-top commitment by the Construction Functional Area Team,” said SNF Fluor Hanford construction manger Randy Adkins. “The entire project team takes responsibility for ensuring that each team member, at the end of the day, is ready to contribute tomorrow.”

“We have good people, and we use teamwork,” said teamster Mark Norland.

Ironworker Bob Bravenic, a Voluntary Protection Program committee member, agreed. “We’re always stressing safety,” he said, “and we watch out for ourselves and each other.”

Other workers installing equipment in the K Basins say they have to understand how the product will function, understand any special terminology used and know what part the system plays in the overall process. This knowledge allows for critical problem-solving and safer performance of the work. The craftsmen are involved from the beginning to the end of the project, and their comments are incorporated in the work-planning process.

Managers also contributed to reaching the safety milestone through efficient scheduling of projects and training opportunities. And they avoided losing key craft competencies to transfers and reductions of force, retaining craft workers who had intimate knowledge of the K Basins. ■