

PNNL director participates in Ukraine events

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Director Lura Powell and Mike Kluse, PNNL's National Security Division director, were part of an American delegation that traveled to Ukraine to participate in events celebrating nuclear safety accomplishment.

At the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant on June 26, Powell participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new full-scope simulator at one of the plant's reactors. The training device is an exact replica of a nuclear plant control room. Through the use of sophisticated simulations, the simulator offers plant personnel the opportunity to practice their operating skills for a wide range of possible accident scenarios.

"This is truly an important milestone in the overall safety improvement efforts at South Ukraine, and I am proud to be part of the celebration during my first visit to Ukraine," Powell told the audience, adding that plant personnel, other Ukrainians, contractors, the National Nuclear Security Administration and PNNL all played important roles in completing the project.

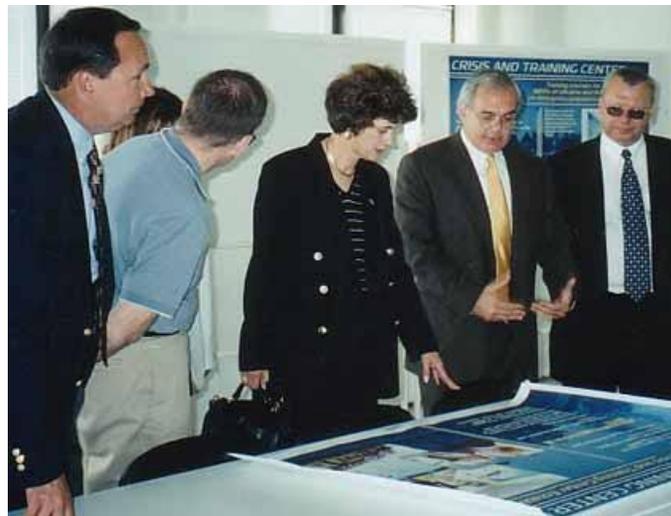
The South Ukraine plant now has simulators at two of its power reactors. Both were provided through the National Nuclear Security Administration program to improve the safety of Soviet-designed nuclear power plants. PNNL has lead technical and administrative responsibilities for the NNSA program.

Visited Chornobyl

On June 29, the PNNL delegation, which also included Dan Couch, manager of the International Nuclear Safety Program, and Susan Senner, integration manager for the program, participated in a dedication ceremony for the Chornobyl Replacement Heat Plant at the Chornobyl site.

"Completion of the heat plant reflects the professionalism and dedication of everyone who worked on this joint Ukraine and United States project," Powell said. "It is a partnership that has helped bring closure to a long-standing agreement between our two countries to support Chornobyl decommissioning." Completion of the heat plant is a key step in the effort to decommission three Chornobyl nuclear reactor units that have been shut down in recent years.

In the absence of excess heat from reactor operations, the \$40 million heat plant facility will provide space heat to reactor and auxiliary buildings so that workers can proceed with decommissioning activities. Heat and steam generated by the natural-gas-powered heat plant also will be used to prevent freezing in plant cooling systems and to support liquid radioactive waste processing work.



Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Director Lura Powell, center, and Associate Laboratory Director Mike Kluse, far left, receive a briefing at the Off-Site Crisis and Training Center near Slavutych, Ukraine. The center was one of many facilities visited by a PNNL delegation during a recent trip to Ukraine.

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PNNL director participates in Ukraine events, cont.

Construction of the facility began in 1998. PNNL, via the DOE program, jointly managed the project with Ukraine. Ukrainian and U.S. firms carried out the design and construction phases. Jim Hartley of PNNL's National Security Division has lived in Ukraine for the past two years to oversee construction, and he says it's been a challenging project. "But everyone has been dedicated to keeping the project on track and within budget," he added.

Successful trip

In addition to PNNL representatives, the Chernobyl ceremony was attended by the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Carlos Pascual, and NNSA officials, including James Turner of the Office of International Nuclear Safety. Additional representatives of NNSA, the Department of State, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Embassy in Kiev joined Ukrainian government and industry officials in marking completion of this major milestone for Chernobyl.

Mike Kluse of PNNL termed the Ukraine trip a success. "PNNL staff members are doing important work at an international level and their efforts are making a tremendous impact on nuclear safety in Ukraine and other nations. It is exciting to see the progress and the international cooperation, and I was very pleased that our director was able to participate and get a first-hand look at the projects PNNL is involved in," he said. ♦