

Hanford respirators at 'Ground Zero'

Rescue workers at the site of the World Trade Center attack were, and still are, hampered by voluminous amounts of dust, ash and silica in the air. Officials in New York put out a call for respirators and the Department of Energy responded.

Cliff Ledford, administrator of the Fluor Hanford Safety Division's Respirator Protection Program, said Hanford had about 2,000 full-facepiece respirators in its laundry facility, so he coordinated with Charlie Kasch of DOE and Joe Caudill, a Fluor Hanford procurement specialist, to have the respirators prepared for shipment to New York.

Duratek Federal Services of Hanford arranged for shipment and donated the shipping costs to have the respirators sent by truck to Seattle and then flown to New York. Special permission was received from New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani to transit the city's airspace to deliver them.

Hanford then took the lead role when other DOE sites had trouble shipping their contributions. "Everyone was running into problems with shipping, and once we got that sorted out, we ended up getting about 10,000 respirators sent," said Ledford. "It required quite a bit of effort by everyone." In addition to the 2,000 respirators from Hanford, the Oak Ridge, Rocky Flats and Fernald sites provided another 8,000 masks.

The Hanford respirators feature one-piece polycarbonate lenses, rubber sealing straps and side-by-side high efficiency particulate air, or HEPA, filters. These features are critical to relief personnel because they protect from inhalation of particles, allow a wide field of view and restrict odors. Various respirator manufacturers jumped in to contribute more than half a million HEPA filter cartridges.

"To be honest, it felt good to be able to do something," Ledford said. "Once we got going, the whole thing snowballed. We're just glad that Hanford is able to pull together to help." ♦