

# Waste sampling workers reach safety milestone

Deborah Dunn, FH

The Waste Sampling and Characterization Facility, one of Hanford's newest facilities, is celebrating the achievement of one-half million hours worked with no one missing a day because of a job-related injury. The record began the day the doors opened at WSCF, Oct. 1, 1993, and the 500,000th hour was worked this past July.

WSCF employees report good safety extends back through the facility's construction phase, and continues to the present. Steve Prevet, Fluor Hanford Environment, Safety and Health statistician for company safety trending, said that during the accumulation of the 500,000 hours, only one restricted workday occurred, resulting in a very clean safety record.



Joel VanSant conducts an analytical process at a laboratory in the Waste Sampling and Characterization Facility.

The safety accomplishment was achieved while completing tasks that routinely involve hazardous chemicals, low-level radioactive samples and a variety of specialized equipment at Hanford's core analytical laboratory for low-level radioactive and non-radioactive sampling.

"This 500,000-hour accomplishment is a positive result of the teamwork and team planning evident throughout the whole organization," said Duane Renberger, senior project manager for Analytical Services. "It demonstrates how we approach work using Integrated Safety Management."

At the Sept. 7 safety celebration, Renberger credited respect for the individual as an underlying foundation of the WSCF safety culture. He urged the staff members to continue their safety focus as increased support to the vitrification project brings change.

"A half million hours is a big deal and a true testament to the teamwork we show every day," Jennifer Nuzum, WSCF acting facility manager, told the celebration crowd. She said it would take one person more than 250 years — not counting holidays and two-week-vacations — to achieve 500,000 safe work hours.

"In our laboratory setting, we encounter unknown material every day," Nuzum said. "We work with chemicals and have radiological considerations. We perform work with power tools, heavy equipment and multi-faceted systems.

"We sometimes work alone," she continued, "in inclement weather or after hours. There have been contractor changes and procedure changes. There has been constant change. Despite this, we take care of ourselves and others."

"The staff as a whole takes pride in this accomplishment and that helps us do better," said Scot Fitzgerald, Analytical Services manager for WSCF. He said being in a new, clutter-free facility with good housekeeping enhances the safety culture, especially since many employees have been at WSCF since it opened. Fitzgerald noted that, while there have been no lost workdays, first-aid cases occur and demonstrate employee willingness to come forward if injured.

*Continued on page 10.*

## Waste sampling workers reach safety milestone, cont.

Teamwork is a vital element of WSCF's safety, according to Mark Kastl. "We're like a family here," he said. "We've never had a lost workday, not even during construction. That goes back approximately eight years, although the construction phase isn't included in the safety statistics." Kastl is chairman of the WSCF Zero Accident Council, a chemical technician and the building steward for the Paper Allied-Industrial Chemical and Energy Workers in the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council.

WSCF is located between the 200 East and 200 West Areas. It houses more than 20 laboratory rooms with state-of-the-art equipment. It processes about 40,000 samples annually. The number of employees has fluctuated, numbering about 80 now, including 20 HAMTC bargaining-unit members.

WSCF is operated for the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office by Fluor Hanford Analytical Services, part of Hanford Site Operations. The lab supports Hanford cleanup progress with process control and regulatory analyses for gas, liquid, soil and sludge samples. ♦

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