

More debris removed from the K East Basin

Fluor Hanford workers have just completed removing additional debris from the K East Basin. Another 16 tons of debris were taken out of the basin in an intense campaign in August, after approximately 140 tons of debris – including 40 tons of fuel racks – were removed last year. Workers from the K West Basin transferred to KE temporarily, to perform the work so that KE personnel could continue to focus on sludge retrieval.

“We knew we’d have to remove more debris to meet our endpoint criteria,” says Rob Gentry, K East Basin sludge and debris manager, “but the question was when to do it. We wanted to go ahead with removing sludge as our top priority, but getting the additional debris out of our way allows us to pump sludge from the basin more effectively.”

Chris Lucas, KE Basin closure director, added, “Workers have gotten so good at removing debris, and developed so many lessons learned, that we knew it was a good idea to go ahead and get it out of the basin right now while we’re still pumping sludge.”

Debris of varying sizes, shapes, and contamination levels was removed in the recent campaign. However, the large Fuel Transfer System in the KE Basin is being left behind for future decommissioning work. Crews placed the debris and racks into large industrial containers (known as IP-2 containers) to be staged for burial as low-level waste in Hanford’s Environ-

mental Restoration Disposal Facility (ERDF). The IP-2s each have nearly 1,500 cubic feet of space, and can hold up to 20,000 pounds of debris.

Workers removing the debris wore two pairs of waterproof protective clothing, and used respirators, due to high contamination levels in the basin. Electric hoists and underwater lights were necessary to guide the work.

To date, the KBC Project has captured more than 95 percent of the sludge in the KE Basin in containers. Retrieving the final portion is expected to be the most difficult. Vacuuming the bulk of the sludge is forecast to finish in early October, ahead of the Oct. 31 milestone date. Soon after that, the sludge will be transferred to containers in the KW Basin. Also this autumn, Fluor Hanford crews will install a unique hydrolaser system in the KE Basin, to prepare for decontaminating the basin’s walls.

Michele Gerber, Communications

Crews removed debris from the K East Basin during August. The complicated and precise work was done carefully. Sometimes it took a crew of 15 people to remove a single large item. Small debris brought its

own challenges. Often, it was hard to separate small debris from the sludge. Workers participated in every step of planning the job methods and techniques.

