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Hanford Site

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Hanford Advances Cleanup Mission, Removes Waste from 23rd Large Underground Tank

RICHLAND, Wash. — The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Hanford team has finished removing radioactive waste from the 23rd underground storage tank, marking continued progress towards site remediation and revitalization.

“Safely retrieving waste from aging tanks is one of Hanford’s highest priorities,” said Hanford Field Office Assistant Manager for Tank Waste Operations, Mat Irwin. “This retrieval reflects steady progress, disciplined execution and our continued commitment to protecting human health and the environment.”

Hanford Tank Waste Operations and Closure (H2C) workers transferred about 41,000 gallons of decades-old solid waste from single-shell Tank A-102 in the site’s East Area to a double-shell tank for continued safe storage. Waste removed from the 23 tanks to date totals about 3.4 million gallons.

From 1944 to 1989, Hanford produced 74 tons of plutonium for the country’s nuclear weapons program. To store the radioactive and chemical byproducts, the site built thick, reinforced concrete tanks lined inside with steel and buried under several feet of soil to shield workers from radiation. The tanks held up to a million gallons each, and when production stopped at the end of the Cold War, 56 million gallons of waste was in 177 of the large tanks.

The Department and its contractors have completed retrieval operations in two of the Site’s tank farms. A Tank Farm is the third to have waste moved out of the older tanks

with a single steel liner into newer tanks that have a second liner for added leak protection.

“The Hanford workforce is highly skilled and well-trained to meet the unique challenges that come with tank waste retrieval,” said Phil Breidenbach, H2C’s chief operating officer. “Their success stems from their ownership of the mission and their commitment to reducing risk.”

Workers already are making progress removing waste from the Site’s 24th single-shell tank, A-106. Retrieval operations on that tank should wrap up later this summer.



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