

Plutonium Finishing Plant Recovery Update

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From: Connie Simiele, Assistant Manager, Plutonium Finishing Plant Recovery

To: CHPRC Employees (please cascade)

Subject: PFP UPDATE: NO CONTAMINATION DETECTED DURING ADDITIONAL SURVEYS OF PFP-CONTROLLED GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Today, Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) radiological control technicians (RCT) finished surveying the inside of 53 PFP-controlled government vehicles, including air and cabin filters (if equipped), and detected no contamination. The surveys were in response to a stop work employees issued on Feb. 20 on the use of those vehicles until surveys were complete. With the surveys complete, the employees agreed to lift the stop work. I want to thank the RCTs at PFP for their diligence in performing those surveys and for their response to the wind events over the weekend. Thank you.

Processes for surveying vehicles have been established and used extensively to survey both the exterior and interior of vehicles when requested by employees. The survey equipment and processes used to check for contamination will detect contamination levels well below those that would be expected to be harmful to personnel.

The 53 vehicles surveyed were originally surveyed following the December 2017 contamination spread, and no contamination was detected then. At that time, the PFP team also surveyed the engine air filters and/or cabin air filters of one personal and two government vehicles that had the highest levels of exterior contamination following the December 2017 contamination spread, and found no contamination on those filters. (Some vehicles did not have cabin air filters.)

Follow-up surveys of personal vehicles conducted as part of requested home surveys found no contamination in vehicle air filters, and resurveys of personal vehicles conducted in January found no contamination in air filters. As a reminder, you can request a survey of your vehicle or your home. Contact Sheila Godfrey at (509) 376-6080 for more information.

Yesterday, a Seattle-based interest group issued a press release stating laboratory analysis of air filters from two vehicles that had been parked at PFP detected americium-241. Neither CHPRC nor the Department of Energy was given the opportunity to conduct a review of this information or reported data. The press release did not provide the levels of americium-241 detected in the air filters, but media reports associated with the interest group's analysis indicated the levels were less than one picocurie/gram. That level is so low, the instruments field technicians use to survey vehicles at the site wouldn't detect it—and those instruments are sensitive enough to detect contamination well below levels required for protection of personnel, the public and the environment. For context, according to the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#) (NRC), home smoke detectors contain up to 1 million picocuries of americium sandwiched between layers of metal and sealed in the ionization chambers. A 2001 NRC [study](#) found people with two smoke detectors in their homes receive less than 0.002 millirems of radiation dose each year.

If you would like more information on our PFP recovery work or have questions, I encourage you to visit the [CHPRC intranet site](#) to learn about the latest developments and ask questions.

Please continue to focus on safety.