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Event Summary

HANFORD EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Event Summary 5/10/2017, 11:21 PM
HANFORD SITE EMERGENCY TERMINATED

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Richland Operations Office announced that the Hanford Site emergency has been terminated. The DOE Richland Operations Office activated the Emergency Operations Center at the Hanford Site at approximately 6:20 a.m. on Tuesday, May 9, after the collapse of a 20-foot section of a tunnel used to store contaminated materials. The 360-foot tunnel is located next to the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant, also known as PUREX, which is located in the center of the Hanford Site, in an area known as the 200 East Area. All employees located on the Hanford Site north of the Wye Barricade were instructed to shelter in place that morning, immediately after the collapse. Workers were sent home from work early. Air and surface sampling confirmed that no contamination was detected following the collapse. While the tunnel is being repaired, workers will be required to fill the hole in the tunnel on Tuesday night, and during work most Hanford Site workers will be on a normal work schedule on Thursday, May 11. Before allowing uncontrolled access to the tunnel, officials will also identify and implement longer-term actions. No radiological or industrial hygiene monitoring was detected as a result of the collapse or while the hole was being filled. However, until additional actions can be taken to ensure safety, access to portions of the Hanford Site's 200 East Area will continue to be restricted.

Hanford Contacts
The Hanford Joint Information Center, located in the Hanford Federal Building, is the central location for the release of all official event information.
The public can request information regarding the event by calling (509) 376-8118. The media may call (509) 376-3322.

Event Links
Hanford Site Map

Latest Information

10 May 2017
11:24 PM

Crews at the Hanford Site have filled the hole in the tunnel near the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant (PUREX) with soil. Approximately 53 truckloads of soil, or approximately 550 cubic yards of soil, were used by crews to fill the hole. Before allowing uncontrolled access to the area where the partial tunnel collapse occurred, officials plan to take additional near-term actions to ensure the safety of the workers and the public. These actions may include placing a cover over the entire tunnel, which is approximately 360 feet long. Officials will also identify and implement longer-term actions. No radiological or industrial hygiene monitoring was detected as a result of the collapse or while the hole was being filled. However, until additional actions can be taken to ensure safety, access to portions of the Hanford Site's 200 East Area will continue to be restricted.

6:55 PM
Due to the emergency in the 200 East Area, at PUREX, Graveyard Shift for all non-essential personnel north of the Wye Barricade is cancelled for tonight.
Only essential employees needed to maintain minimum safe operations are to report to work. 200 East Area WRPS essential personnel are to report to the 2750E facility or ETY.
Route 4 South, North of the Wye Barricade remains closed to all personnel.

Please check the Hanford Hotline for updates to future work schedules.
Personnel with questions or concerns not able to reach their Building Emergency Director or Building Warden can call the EOC at 373-1786, at 373-3876, at 376-8612, or at 376-4712.

For specific questions regarding company policy contact your manager.

1:27 PM

Due to the emergency in the 200 East Area near PUREX, swing shift for all non-essential personnel north of the Wye Barricade is cancelled today, May 10.
Only essential employees needed to maintain minimum safe operations are to report to work. Essential personnel working for Washington River Protection Solutions assigned to the 200 East Area are to report to the 2750E facility or the Effluent Treatment Facility.

Please check the Hanford Hotline for updates to future work schedules.

12:34 PM

This video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3n0j0x5a5s>) shows workers filling the hole in the roof of one of the PUREX tunnels, which are used to store rail cars containing contaminated equipment. The excavator places the dirt in the hole while the mixing machine to the right of the excavator is used to control dust.

9:52 AM

Workers have begun to fill the hole in the tunnel, located near the PUREX Plant in the 200 East Area of the Hanford Site, with soil. Approximately 50 truckloads of soil will be used to fill the hole. There is a mixing machine on the right side of the photo that is being used to control dust. The operator in the cab of the excavator is wearing a protective suit and a filtered air mask.



9:37 AM

Crews have begun filling a collapsed section of a rail car tunnel on the Hanford Site, located next to a former chemical processing facility known as the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant, or PUREX. The hole is being filled with soil using heavy equipment. Approximately 50 truckloads of soil will be used to fill the hole.

Hanford personnel worked throughout the night to stabilize site conditions near the collapsed section of the PUREX tunnel. Crews constructed a gravel road that leads to the tunnel's collapsed section, which provided a stable and clear path for workers to fill the hole in the tunnel.

Workers performing the recovery actions are wearing protective suits and breathing masks. Also, additional measures are being taken to ensure workers are safe, such as restricting access to the immediate area and air monitoring.

The tunnel is one of two rail car tunnels constructed in the 1950s and 1960s near the site's PUREX Plant to store contaminated equipment, loaded on rail cars, from plutonium production operations at the site in southeastern Washington state. The tunnels were constructed of wood and concrete with a soil covering approximately 8 feet deep. The tunnels, which are hundreds of feet long, are located east of the PUREX Plant and extend to the south. The plant and tunnels are located near the center of the Hanford Site, in an area known as the 200 East Area.

6:14 AM

The Department of Energy hosted a briefing at approximately 6:30 a.m. on its Hanford Site Facebook channel. You can view the briefing on the Hanford Site Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HanfordSite/>).

6:01 AM

Due to the recovery actions in the 200 East Area, Hanford site employees should adhere to the following dayshift work schedule for today:
• Non-essential employees north of the Wye Barricade are not to report to work today. • All employees south of the Wye Barricade, including employees working in Richland – are on a regular work schedule

All essential employees needed north of the Wye Barricade to maintain minimum safe operations are to follow their normal work schedule. 200 East Area WRPS essential personnel are to report to the 2750E facility or the ETY. Route 4 South remains closed north of the Wye Barricade. Use alternate Route 2 North or the Rattlesnake Barricade. The Rattlesnake Barricade will remain open until 6:00 a.m. Call the Hanford Hotline at 376-9999 for updates.

For specific questions regarding company policy contact your manager.

3:42 AM

Hanford personnel began preparation work around 8 p.m. Pacific time on May 9 to stabilize and fill a 20-foot-by-20-foot opening over a tunnel that partially collapsed near the PUREX facility at the Hanford Site. This video, taken late on May 9, shows personnel laying down a gravel road that leads to the tunnel's collapsed section. The road will provide a secure and clear path for workers to fill the tunnel opening.

3:16 AM

Due to the recovery actions in the 200 East Area, Hanford site employees should adhere to the following dayshift work schedule for today:
• Non-essential employees north of the Wye Barricade are to report to work at 9:00 a.m. • All employees south of the Wye Barricade, including employees working in Richland – are on a regular work schedule

Essential employees needed north of the Wye Barricade to maintain minimum safe operations are to follow their normal work schedule.
200 East Area WRPS essential personnel are to report to the 2750E facility.

Route 4 South remains closed north of the Wye Barricade. Use alternate Route 2 North or the Rattlesnake Barricade. The Rattlesnake Barricade will remain open until 10:30 a.m.
Call the Hanford Hotline at 376-9999 for updates.

For specific questions regarding company policy contact your manager.

09 May 2017
7:14 PM

Latest information: Due to the emergency at the Hanford Site today, non-essential personnel who work north of the Wye Barricade are being advised not to report for graveyard shift tonight. Only essential employees needed to maintain minimum safe operations are to report to work. An emergency was declared at the site at approximately 6:20 a.m. this morning. Employees at the site were advised to take cover for a few hours as a precaution, with non-essential employees released by approximately 1:30 this afternoon after no contamination was detected.

5:58 PM

In the 1950s and 1960s two tunnels were constructed next to a former chemical processing plant, the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant, or PUREX, located in an industrial area near the center of the Hanford Site called the 200 East Area. The tunnels were constructed of wood and concrete and covered with approximately 8 feet of soil. The tunnels were constructed to hold rail cars that were loaded with contaminated equipment and moved into the tunnels during the Cold War.

During a routine surveillance of the area this morning, a 20-foot-wide hole in the roof of one of the tunnels was observed, leading to the precautionary sheltering of employees and notifications to area counties and states. After no contamination was detected, the shelter in place order was lifted and employees were sent home from work early as a precaution. Workers continue to monitor the area for contamination as a crew prepares to fill the hole with clean soil.

The approximately 360-foot-long tunnel where the partial collapse occurred contains 8 rail cars loaded with contaminated equipment. That tunnel feeds into a longer tunnel that extends hundreds more feet and contains 28 rail cars loaded with contaminated equipment. The hole opened up in the shorter tunnel near where it joins the longer tunnel. The tunnels were sealed in the mid-1990s and are checked periodically.

2:19 PM

Workers on swing shift at the Hanford Site who are not needed for essential site operations this evening are being told to not come into work tonight, as officials determine how to address a partial cave-in of a tunnel near a facility in the center of the site that was discovered this morning. Workers considered essential for site operations are being told to report to work while avoiding the area of the emergency.

The tunnel is one of two constructed during the Cold War near the site's Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant, or PUREX Plant, to store contaminated equipment from plutonium production operations at the site in southeastern Washington state. The tunnels were constructed of wood and concrete with a soil covering approximately 8 feet deep. The tunnels are located east of the PUREX Plant and extend to the south. The plant and tunnels are located near the center of the Hanford Site, in an area known as the 200 East Area.

During a routine surveillance of the area, a hole in the roof of one of the tunnels was discovered. Personnel in the immediate vicinity were evacuated as a precaution out of concern for the potential release of contamination. No contamination has been detected as a result of the partial cave-in of a section of the tunnel's roof. Workers continue to monitor the area for contamination.

Officials declared an emergency for Hanford Site personnel and advised employees in the vicinity of the PUREX Plant to shelter indoors. The take cover was later expanded to Hanford Site employees within the security boundary of the government site north of Richland, Wash. At around noon, most of the employees were told to leave work early as a precaution. At around 1:35 the list of the employees in the vicinity of the tunnels were released from work early.

Officials continue to monitor the air and are working on how they will fix the hole in the tunnel roof. They are looking at options that would provide a barrier between the contaminated equipment in the tunnel and the outside air that would not cause the hole in the tunnel's roof to widen.

2:11 PM

The Department of Energy hosted a briefing at 2:15 PM on its Hanford Site Facebook channel. You can view the briefing on the Hanford Site Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HanfordSite/>).

1:35 PM

Non-essential employees in the vicinity of this morning's emergency event, an area known as the 200 East Area, have been released from work early. All non-essential personnel north of the Wye Barricade have now been released from work early. Workers on swing shift at the Hanford Site who are not needed for essential site operations this evening are being told not to come into work tonight, as officials determine how to address a partial cave-in of a tunnel near a facility in the center of the site that was discovered this morning. Workers considered essential for site operations are being told to report to work while avoiding the area of the emergency.

1:20 PM



12:50 PM



12:13 PM



This picture shows a 20 foot by 20 foot hole in the roof of a tunnel that is hundreds of feet long. Surveys of the area show no indication of release of contamination as a result of the cave-in.

12:08 PM

There is still no indication of a release of contamination from the hole in the PUREX tunnel. Crews are continuing to monitor the site in the vicinity and have not detected contamination. Hanford Site employees north of the Wye Barricade and outside of the 200 East Area are now being released from work early as a precaution (as of 12:00 PM). Personnel in the 200 East Area remain sheltered in-place.

11:50 AM

An alert was declared at the Hanford Site this morning at approximately 8:30 AM. An alert is the lowest level of emergency classification and is declared when an event is not expected to affect personnel outside of the facility boundary. Later this morning, the alert was expanded to a Site Area Emergency. A Site Area Emergency is declared when the event is affecting or could potentially affect personnel beyond the facility boundary but not beyond the boundary of the Hanford Site.

11:24 AM

The Department of Energy held a briefing on its Hanford Site Facebook channel. You can view the briefing on the Hanford Site Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HanfordSite/>).

11:13 AM

Crews are currently surveying the area near the PUREX tunnels for contamination. Crews are using hand surveying techniques in the outer areas around the PUREX facility. At and near the area of subsidence crews have deployed a TALON, which is a remote operated surveying device that is capable of radiological and industrial hygiene monitoring as well as capturing video footage. The TALON device allows crews to safely survey potential areas of contamination from a distance of up to 1/2 mile.

10:54 AM

Responders are on the scene and are reporting the soil has subsided in an area approximately 20 feet by 20 feet over one of the tunnels next to the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility, also known as PUREX. There is no indication of a release of contamination at this point. Responders are getting closer to the area where the soil has subsided for further visual inspection. The subsidence of soil was discovered during a routine surveillance of the area by workers. The tunnels are hundreds of feet long, with approximately eight feet of soil covering them. The depth of the subsidence of soil appears to be into the tunnel.

The tunnels to the PUREX facility are located to the east of the facility, extending south. There are two tunnels, one is approximately 360 feet long and the other is approximately 1,700 feet long. The tunnels were being begun in the 1950s to store contaminated equipment. The 20 foot wide by 20 foot long cave-in is in an area where the two tunnels join together.

10:13 AM

Responders are on the scene and are reporting the soil has subsided in an area approximately 20 feet by 20 feet over one of the tunnels next to the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility, also known as PUREX. There is no indication of a release of contamination at this point. Responders are getting closer to the area where the soil has subsided for further visual inspection. The subsidence of soil was discovered during a routine surveillance of the area by workers. The tunnels are hundreds of feet long, with approximately eight feet of soil covering them. The depth of the subsidence of soil appears to be into the tunnel.

9:30 AM

The Hanford Fire Department is on scene and updates will be posted as they are available. Workers in the vicinity are still being sheltered as a precaution.