

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS — PFP CONTAMINATION SPREAD

Information current as of 4:00 PST Dec. 21, 2017

**1. Q: What is being done for employees who may have left the site with contamination on vehicles?**

A: CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company (CHPRC) completed radiological surveys of personnel who work at the PFP location, along with their vehicles, as well as any other vehicles they have been made aware of, both government and personal. However, it is understandable that additional site employees may have driven in the area and might be concerned about potential contamination spread, if they drove near PFP since Dec. 15 or used the dirt road immediately south of the PFP fence line from Dec. 8 to Dec. 14. If this is the case, CHPRC would like to provide the opportunity to have additional vehicles surveyed. Please contact [vehiclesurvey@rl.gov](mailto:vehiclesurvey@rl.gov) with the vehicle location, color, and license plate number.

**2. Q: What does a home survey entail?**

A: Radiological control technicians visit the home and use handheld instruments to survey areas where contamination would be expected if a worker had been contaminated at the site such as paths into the home. Additional random surveys are conducted on things such as light switches, sink faucets, and door knobs.

**3. Q: What are “specks” of contamination?**

A: Specks, or particles, of contamination are typically too small to be seen. They are detected using hand-held or vehicle-mounted detection instruments. These instruments also detect naturally-occurring radon, which is prevalent at this time of year and during times of weather inversions. Because it takes time to differentiate between radon and contamination from PFP, any contamination discovered is treated as if it came from PFP by decontamination or application of a fixative to keep any particles from becoming airborne. The contamination level of a speck, related to the recent events at PFP, represents a very small fraction of dose received from levels of radiation naturally present in the environment.

**4. Q: Why is information on survey results changing over time?**

A: Primarily because surveys are ongoing and radiological control technicians are using several different types of monitoring devices, some of which provide real-time results and some which must be analyzed to determine the presence of contamination. Technicians are working methodically around the facility to determine the extent of contamination. Additionally, due to current weather conditions (i.e., an inversion), the radiological control technicians are detecting naturally occurring radon, increasing the amount of time needed to analyze survey results.

**5. Q: Have you determined the source of the contamination?**

A: During the week of Dec. 11, crews finished demolishing the Plutonium Reclamation Facility (PRF), which was part of PFP. The demolition went smoothly and there weren't immediate indications of a contamination spread, as continuous air monitors (CAMS) did not alarm. There doesn't appear to be a single event that caused the contamination spread. However, the type of contamination found indicates the spread was most likely related to PRF demolition and was likely exacerbated by the high winds that started late on Dec. 17.

**6. Q: How is this event different from the spread of contamination that happened in June?**

A: In June, about 350 PFP employees took cover when a continuous air monitor in the demolition area sounded, indicating the detection of airborne radiation. The alarm sounded while workers were removing a gallery glovebox during demolition of the plant's Plutonium Reclamation Facility. Workers immediately stopped demolition and applied fixative to the area, and radiological control technicians conducted surveys and applied fixative on a few spots of

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS — PFP CONTAMINATION SPREAD

### Information current as of 4:00 PST Dec. 21, 2017

contamination that were found outside the demolition area. On Dec. 13, a stop work was called at PFP when increased radioactive activity was detected by lapel samplers worn by six workers conducting demolition activities. While there were no indications of increased airborne radiation levels on the CAMS, the elevated lapel samples indicated contamination beyond the posted boundaries at PFP. Workers used vehicle-mounted and hand-held radiation detectors to survey areas around the plant to determine the extent of the contamination and used fixative to deal with specks of contamination when discovered, so the specks wouldn't become airborne.

**7. Q: Were PFP employees asked to take cover in December, like they did in July?**

A: After specks of contamination were found outside mobile office trailers at the plant during surveying on Dec. 18, PFP employees were asked to stay inside their offices until surveying of the area was complete. This was done to help prevent the potential further spread of contamination through foot traffic in the area. This was a conservative decision. This was not a take cover, which requires securing ventilation and is declared when airborne radiation is detected. CHPRC restricted access to areas where contamination specks were detected and is arranging for work spaces further away from PFP. It is likely that PFP employees will be working from temporary locations for some time.

**8. Q: Will all employees be given tests to ensure they haven't breathed contamination?**

A: Any employee can request a bioassay test at any time, which requires a fecal sample. The results of bioassay tests take several weeks to be returned. Radiological experts would be available to meet with any employee who receives a positive bioassay. All results become part of that employee's radiological exposure history at Hanford.

**9. Q: What will happen next?**

A: DOE made the decision to halt work on any demolition activities and place the project in a safety pause. The only work going on at PFP right is additional radiological surveys and securing of locations where contamination is found.