

ANNOUNCEMENT

Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550
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To: HANFORD SITE EMPLOYEES

Subject: DOE INVESTIGATING MOVEMENT OF CONTAMINATED
EQUIPMENT OUT OF PLUTONIUM FINISHING PLANT
RADIOLOGICAL BUFFER AREA

The Richland Operations Office is overseeing an investigation by contractors CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CHPRC) and Mission Support Alliance of the removal of a piece of rigging equipment with low levels of contamination from the Plutonium Finishing Plant's (PFP) Radiological Buffer Area (RBA) without the required radiological survey.

The Department was notified that a survey of the piece of equipment—a “spreader bar” that distributes weight while hoisting items—at the Site's 6290 Building detected low levels of contamination (Approximately 230 disintegrations per minute per 100 centimeters squared, including plutonium-239). The 6290 Building is used to store hoisting and rigging equipment.

In a critique held with workers this morning, we determined the timeline of the movement of the spreader bar. On July 26, a worker who thought a radiological survey had been performed loaded the bar on a truck and moved it out of PFP's RBA. The truck travelled to two Hanford Site locations and a Department of Energy (DOE) contractor facility off the Hanford Site. The spreader bar was then unloaded and stored in an outdoor laydown yard at the 6290 Building and then moved inside the building. No additional contamination has been detected at any of the locations where the truck travelled.

The bar has been moved into an area controlled for contamination (a radiological material area). The Department is working with its contractors and the Washington State Departments of Health (DOH) and Ecology (Ecology) to determine what actions will be necessary to protect workers and the public.

While continuing to investigate the occurrence, CHPRC has changed its protocols on the release and movement of materials within the RBA to maintain accountability and prevent the movement of equipment out of areas controlled for contamination. DOE will continue overseeing the investigation of this occurrence, and this will also be a focus during an upcoming assessment of the contractor's readiness to resume demolition activities.