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Investigation shows no tank leak in Double-Shell Tank AZ-101

RICHLAND, Wash. — Contamination recently found on a piece of equipment used to inspect a Hanford double-shell tank is not the result of a primary tank leak, an investigation has found.

The Department of Energy's Office of River Protection (ORP) and Hanford tank farms contractor Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) have completed the initial phase of an investigation and the analysis of the contamination found on a robotic crawler deployed in the annulus (the space between the primary and secondary tank walls) of double-shell tank AZ-101. The results of the analysis rule out the possibility that the contamination came from a primary tank leak.

ORP and WRPS are now focusing the investigation on other potential sources, such as historical contamination from previous operations.

The contamination was found on May 18, during a planned inspection of the double-shell tank annulus. Workers used a robotic crawler to access difficult to reach locations during this inspection and found contamination on the equipment when the crawler was removed.

Exit surveys showed low levels of contamination on a worker's clothing, but no skin contamination was found on any of the workers involved in the inspection. Follow-up surveys at the change trailer confirmed no other workers were affected and all crew members were cleared for normal duty.

ORP and WRPS conduct a rigorous tank integrity program, which includes enhanced and extensive inspections of the underground tanks using remotely operated equipment. The inspection, which resulted in the crawler contamination, was part of that tank integrity program.