

June 8, 2017

At approximately 10:30 a.m. (PST) this morning, about 350 employees of the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP) at the Hanford Site were released from a precautionary take cover that was established approximately three hours earlier after an air monitor set up in an outside demolition area sounded an alarm due to the detection of low levels of contamination. The employees were released from the take cover to return to their normal work duties. No injuries have been reported as a result of this event.

The alarm, called a continuous air monitor (CAM) alarm, sounded while crews were removing one of the gallery gloveboxes at the plant's Plutonium Reclamation Facility. Gloveboxes are large pieces of equipment that were used when the plant was producing plutonium during the Cold War. The CAM alarm is in the demolition area, in an area where contamination is expected. Crews immediately stopped demolition and applied fixative to the area. Fixative is an adhesive sprayed on the building during demolition to control contamination. Employees at PFP took cover while a recovery team entered the area. The survey team is conducting additional surveys and applying additional fixative to mitigate any further contamination spread.

A few low-level spots of contamination have been found outside the area nearest the demolition zone. As areas of contamination are found, workers apply fixative to those areas to lock contaminants in place. The contamination will be removed and disposed of. Surveys and recovery activities will continue throughout the day and evening.

With the take cover lifted, employees are allowed to leave buildings, with instructions to avoid areas where contamination has been identified. PFP employees will be released from work at their normal time this afternoon.