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Hanford Plant Completes Startup Testing

RICHLAND, Wash. – The Hanford Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant has completed all startup testing of components and systems associated with transforming low-activity tank waste into a safe form for disposal.

This accomplishment moves the plant fully into the commissioning phase where final steps are taken to prepare for vitrifying, or immobilizing in glass, radioactive and chemical waste as part of Hanford’s Direct-Feed Low-Activity Waste (DFLAW) Program.

“It was a huge milestone for the startup team to transfer the final DFLAW systems to the care, custody and control of plant management,” said Valerie McCain, project director and senior vice president for Bechtel National, Inc., the prime contractor designing, building and commissioning the plant. “We are in the final phase of our preparations to start vitrifying waste.”

The DFLAW Program is a system of interdependent projects and infrastructure improvements, managed and highly integrated, that must operate together to vitrify the waste.

“With the completion of startup testing, we can focus on commissioning and establishing the operating culture necessary to safely begin a new era of operations at Hanford,” said Mat Irwin, Office of River Protection deputy assistant manager for the plant. “All contractors are driving toward 24/7 operations to ensure we can operate the plant successfully.”

During vitrification, waste is treated to remove radioactive cesium and solids and will be fed directly to the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant’s Low-Activity Waste Facility melters. The waste and glass-forming materials will be mixed, heated and poured into specially designed stainless-steel containers. The containers will be transported a short distance to the Site’s Integrated Disposal Facility for disposal.

The plant facilities can be viewed using the self-guided Hanford Virtual Tour.

Electrician Ralph Bisla conducts tests of the finishing line inside the Low-Activity Waste Facility at Hanford’s Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant.