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Workers Enter Cocooned F Reactor for Scheduled Inspection

Inspection by DOE ensures reactors are safe, secure

RICHLAND, Wash. – Workers from Mission Support Alliance, LLC., removed the welds around the steel door of the F Reactor last week before stepping inside the reactor to complete its periodic inspection. This is the first time the Department of Energy (DOE) has had the reactor open since 2008.

The F Reactor is one of nine reactors along the Columbia River at the Department's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State, where environmental cleanup has been ongoing since 1989.

As part of the Tri-Party Agreement, the Department completes surveillance and maintenance activities of cocooned reactors periodically to evaluate the structural integrity of the safe storage enclosure and to ensure confinement of any remaining hazardous materials.

“This entry marks a transition of sorts because the Hanford Long-Term Stewardship Program, for the first time, was responsible for conducting the entry and surveillance and maintenance activities,” said Keith Grindstaff, Energy Department Long-Term Stewardship Program Manager. “As the River Corridor cleanup work is completed and transitioned to long-term stewardship, our program will manage any on-going requirements.”

The 105-F Reactor, the last of the three original plutonium production reactors constructed as part of the top-secret Manhattan Project during World War II, operated from 1945 to 1965. The reactor was sealed up in a secure, cocooned state in 2003. The cocooning process, also called interim safe storage, allows time for radiation levels to decay.

“This inspection gives us an opportunity to conduct radiological surveys, make any repairs to the roof and remove any hazardous substances,” said Rick Moren, MSA Director of Long-Term Stewardship. “During the inspection, workers found the reactor to be in good shape and almost identical to the last time it was inspected.”

With the inspections complete, the reactor door has been re-sealed until the next entry period.

As a part of DOE's Long-Term Stewardship Program, workers will inspect four other cocooned reactors – 105-C, 105-D, 105-H and 105-N – next spring. A fifth cocooned reactor, 105-DR, was inspected in 2013 and is not included in the 2015 entry schedule.

Note: B-roll video of the F Reactor inspection is available by request and can be seen here:

<http://youtu.be/8sgroLQfPTk>

The Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) manages the Hanford Site near Richland, Washington. Along with the DOE Office of River Protection (ORP), DOE-RL is responsible for the federal government's cleanup of the legacy of more than 40 years of plutonium production at Hanford for the nation's defense. Except for the tank waste mission managed by ORP, DOE-RL is responsible for cleanup of all remaining Hanford waste streams and is currently focused on cleaning out and demolishing the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and solid waste, treating contaminated groundwater, moving radioactive sludge out of the K West Basin and away from the Columbia River, and configuring Hanford Site infrastructure for the future. The office oversees Hanford Site work that is conducted by a federal and contractor workforce of approximately 4,300 personnel. Visit www.hanford.gov.

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