THE HANFORD SITE

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Hanford Uses In-house Oil Treatments to Eliminate Waste, Save Money

RICHLAND, Wash. – Electrical utility workers at the Hanford Site have begun using a system that reconditions, or purifies, used oil, reducing environmental waste and saving money — an estimated $2.5 million over the next five years.

Hanford contractor Mission Support Alliance (MSA) recently purchased an oil processing cart to process old electrical transformer oil to make it like new again. As the site's services provider, MSA is responsible for maintaining Hanford's electrical utility systems, including maintenance and operations. There are more than 700 electrical transformers on the site, each containing between 300 and 12,000 gallons of oil.

"The Department of Energy and our contractors are committed to finding new ways to protect the environment and save taxpayer dollars," said Sean Madderom, manager of Hanford's electrical program. "By eliminating oil waste and extending the life of electrical transformers, we expect to see near-term and long-term cost savings."

Rick Boarder with MSA's electrical utilities program emphasized the importance of oil reconditioning.

"Degraded oil can cause breakdowns, outages, and other system failures — all of which would negatively impact cleanup work. Not only are we able to protect this vital infrastructure through oil reconditioning, we're reducing waste. It's a win-win," Boarder said.

While many third-party vendors specialize in oil reconditioning, it can be difficult to coordinate the necessary electrical outages with a vendor's schedule at Hanford. Performing the work in-house with specially trained employees reduces costs and ensures the work can be performed as needed.

With the new oil processing cart, MSA will be able to recondition and reclaim transformer oil an unlimited number of times — for the lifespan of each transformer. The 4,500-pound oil processing cart is about the size of a 6-foot-by-8-foot trailer and can be easily transported. Using the cart, technicians hook up to a transformer, then filter and heat the oil to remove impurities.

MSA first used the oil processing cart on two transformers in Hanford's 200 West Area. After use, oil samples showed positive results.

Mission Support Alliance substation electrician Matthew Starkey, left, and environmental compliance officer Mike Demiter perform oil reconditioning on a transformer.

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The Department of Energy (DOE) is responsible for the federal government's cleanup of the legacy of more than 40 years of plutonium production at the Hanford Site near Richland, Wash. The DOE Office of River Protection (ORP) is responsible for the safe and efficient retrieval, treatment and disposal of the 56 million gallons of chemical and radioactive waste stored in Hanford's 177 underground tanks. The River Protection Project is the largest and most complex environmental remediation project in the nation. ORP oversees the tank waste management mission and the building of the world's largest radioactive waste treatment plant, which will immobilize the legacy tank waste through vitrification. The DOE Richland Operations Office is responsible for all remaining Hanford cleanup and is currently focused on demolishing the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and 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, with an emphasis on supporting the tank waste mission. The two offices oversee Hanford Site work that is conducted by a federal and contractor workforce of approximately 9,000 personnel. Visit www.hanford.gov for more information about Hanford Site.

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