

## News from Around the Complex

*April 2007*

---

April 29, 2007

### **3 Hanford burial sites excavated by deadline, *Tri-City Herald***

Five forklifts, a flatbed trailer and a locked safe were among the 126,000 tons of contaminated material dug up by Hanford contractors in three burial grounds just north of Hanford's 300 Area buildings. Monday is the legal deadline for the Department of Energy to have the three dump sites cleaned up, but the work has been finished by Washington Closure Hanford four months ahead of schedule. The three dump sites were among those used by Hanford workers to dispose of some of the debris generated in the 300 Area just north of Richland. There they fabricated uranium fuel that would be used to produce plutonium in Hanford's reactors for the nation's nuclear weapons program during World War II and the Cold War. They also tested chemical processes to separate plutonium from the irradiated fuel before processes were deployed on the production scale in central Hanford. During World War II and the Cold War, Hanford was not only a place to produce plutonium, but its soil also was considered the permanent dump site for toxic chemical and radioactive waste produced in the process.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8838737p-8739383c.html>

April 26, 2007

### **Officials: Morris okay for nuclear facility, *The Herald News***

MORRIS -- Officials have determined the General Electric Co.'s Morris-area site is environmentally suitable for a proposed nuclear-spent fuel rod recycling facility. GE held a public meeting Wednesday to share the results of the site study. Following the presentation, people were able to ask questions of the GE and research officials. GE's Morris-area site and 12 other sites were chosen by the Department of Energy to conduct a site characterization study to see if the site could house the facilities. The DOE gave GE \$1.5 million for the study of its 889 acres. The proposal is part of President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, which seeks to build three facilities: an advanced fuel cycle research facility, a nuclear fuel recycling center and an advanced recycling reactor, which would destroy long-lived radioactive elements in the new fuel, while generating electricity.

[http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/heraldnews/news/358961,4\\_1\\_JO26\\_NUCLEAR\\_S1.article](http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/heraldnews/news/358961,4_1_JO26_NUCLEAR_S1.article)

April 25, 2007

### **United States and Japan Sign Joint Nuclear Energy Action Plan to Promote Nuclear Energy Cooperation, *DOE Press Release***

WASHINGTON, DC – United States Department of Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman and Japan's Ministers Akira Amari, Bunmei Ibuki, and Taro Aso, this week presented to U.S. President George W. Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the United States-Japan Joint Nuclear Energy Action Plan. The Action Plan - a product of extensive negotiations between the U.S. and Japan - provides a framework for increased collaboration in nuclear energy. It builds upon the significant, longstanding civilian nuclear cooperation between the two nations and will contribute to increasing energy security and managing nuclear waste, addressing nuclear nonproliferation and climate change, and advancing goals put forth in President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) initiative.

<http://energy.gov/news/4991.htm>

April 24, 2007

**Panel says case not made for new warhead, *The Denver Post***

WASHINGTON- The Bush administration has yet to make the case for building a new generation of replacement warheads and "the role of nuclear weapons" in a post-Cold War, post-9/11 world, a panel of nuclear weapons experts said Tuesday. Development of the new warhead, the first in two decades, could have "international impacts" if critics view it as a new weapon rather than a replacement for the current aging stockpile, said the scientists, including three former directors of the government's nuclear weapons research laboratories. Some countries could see the warhead "as contrary to both the spirit and letter" of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty "unless explicit and credible efforts to counter such assertions are made," said the panel, which was convened by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to study the warhead plan. The scientists also said in a report that it is impossible to estimate the cost of warhead modernization plan, or assure that Energy Department claims of cost savings will ever be achieved. Proponents of the program may be "overselling" the eventual benefits, the report said.

[http://www.denverpost.com/nationworld/ci\\_5739397](http://www.denverpost.com/nationworld/ci_5739397)

April 23, 2007

**Why GNEP can't jump to the future, *Physorg.com***

Congress is now considering whether to approve or zero out the \$405 million that President Bush is proposing to spend in fiscal year 2008 on the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP)—a program aimed at rendering plutonium inert in nuclear weapons but still useful in nuclear power plants. Nuclear experts at the National Academy of Sciences have long questioned the practicability of the technologies GNEP plans to employ. Currently, the Government Accounting Office is now reviewing the program. This, however, leaves legislators with an information gap as they struggle to decide whether to fully fund the plan, eliminate it altogether, or redirect some of its funding to the many successful energy programs whose budgets President Bush is proposing to gut in FY 2008. In particular, major questions have been raised about the magnitude and costs of radioactive wastes stemming from the GNEP program. To help legislators and the American public bridge this information gap, the Institute for Policy Studies will release a rigorous study of GNEP on April 23rd. Directed by Robert Alvarez, Senior Policy Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of Energy from 1993 to 1999, the report concludes that the program is likely to squander billions in taxpayer dollars on an unproven reprocessing technology that will generate unprecedented and unmanageable amounts of highly radioactive wastes without plausible disposition paths.

<http://www.physorg.com/news96560922.html>

Report available at: <http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/070423-radioactivewastes.pdf>

April 23, 2007

**Department of Energy Designates the Idaho National Laboratory Advanced Test Reactor as a National Scientific User Facility, DOE Press Release**

WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today designated the Idaho National Laboratory's (INL) Advanced Test Reactor (ATR) as a National Scientific User Facility. Establishing the ATR as a National Scientific User Facility will help assert U.S. leadership in nuclear science and technology, and will attract new users - universities, laboratories and industry - to conduct research at the ATR. This facility will support basic and applied nuclear research and development (R&D), furthering President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative, which will advance the nation's energy security needs.

<http://energy.gov/news/4987.htm>

April 20, 2007

**Higher Hanford budgets projected, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Energy is projecting a Hanford budget that will increase about 21 percent from fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2012. The amounts are projected based on the Bush administration's request to Congress for the coming year and its work plans for the four years after that. The projection serves as a road map for Hanford for the next five years and outlines the cleanup work DOE plans at the nuclear reservation that once made plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. The five-year funding profile uses the \$1.88 billion available in the current fiscal year as a base and projects that will increase to \$2.28 billion in fiscal year 2012. That would be with steady increases every year except fiscal year 2009, which would dip to \$1.90 billion from the \$1.94 billion in the fiscal year 2008 request to Congress. DOE is planning to spend \$690 million each year on design and construction of the \$12.3 billion vitrification plant being built to turn much of the radioactive waste in underground tanks into a stable glass form for permanent disposal. That's the amount DOE originally projected would be needed each year to build the plant.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8808704p-8709499c.html>

April 20, 2007

**Nevada official calls for NRC to address "critical safety issue" related to nuclear waste dump proposed for Yucca Mountain, *State of Nevada Press Release***

CARSON CITY – Bob Loux, executive director of Nevada's Agency for Nuclear Projects, urged the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) today to reject the U.S. Department of Energy's plan to claim safety credit for "drip shields" expected to protect metal nuclear waste containers from water dripping into the proposed underground waste dump at Yucca Mountain. Installation of the drip shields would not take place for 100 to 300 years after the dump becomes operational, according to DOE's plans. Loux sent a strongly worded letter today to Dale Klein, chairman of the NRC, the organization that will consider DOE's application to obtain a license to move forward with the Yucca Mountain Project. "I write to draw the commission's attention to a critical safety and legal issue that has been disregarded by the NRC staff in its pre-licensing interactions with DOE on the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain," Loux wrote. "The issue is whether any safety credit should be given to so-called 'drip shields' in the post-closure repository performance assessment when, as explained below, it is doubtful that the drip shields would ever be installed."

<http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2007/pdf/nv070419pr.pdf>

Letter: <http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2007/pdf/nv070419klein.pdf>

April 19, 2007

**Nuclear parts plant may be moved: New facility would be better able to meet national security functions, *Lawrence Journal-World (Kansas)***

Kansas City, Mo. — The government wants to replace the aging nuclear weapons parts plant in Kansas City with a \$500 million plant that would include buildings totaling more than 1 million square feet. If the plan is approved, the new plant would be built in south Kansas City next to the former Richards-Gebaur Memorial Airport, federal officials said Tuesday. It would replace a plant originally built in World War II to make warplane engines. The new facility would occupy a 185-acre campus. The GSA has an option to buy the south Kansas City site and has preliminary approval to seek requests from developers this summer for a plant that would accommodate the

Honeywell Federal Manufacturing & Technologies plant in a build-to-suit leasing arrangement.

[http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2007/apr/19/nuclear\\_parts\\_plant\\_may\\_be\\_moved/](http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2007/apr/19/nuclear_parts_plant_may_be_moved/)

April 17, 2007

**Nuke waste moves safer, Knoxville News-Sentinel**

OAK RIDGE - The first shipment of super-loaded boxes of nuclear waste left Oak Ridge on Monday bound for the Nevada Test Site. EnergX, the Department of Energy's waste contractor, is loading six drums of waste into each of the giant containers, which are then filled with polyurethane foam and sealed with a special heating technique. The U.S. Environmental Protection agency recently approved "macroencapsulation" as an alternative for transporting and disposing of mixed waste. Mixed waste has both radioactive elements and hazardous chemicals. Tony Buhl, the president of EnergX, said the technique is expected to save big bucks and speed the processing of radioactive waste at the Oak Ridge plant on state Highway 95. EnergX developed a special technique for sealing the big boxes, using a relatively low heat to permanently bond the high-density polyethylene lid and liner within the carbon steel container. That enhances the safety of bulk-packaging of nuclear waste. One of the drawbacks of other sealing techniques, such as welding, is that they introduce the potential for sparks - and fire - around the hazardous materials, Buhl said.

[http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local\\_news/article/0,1406,KNS\\_347\\_5487953,00.html](http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5487953,00.html)

April 16, 2007

**Dismantling work on schedule at Y-12: Work on stockpiled units of four types of weapons might be finished this year, Knoxville News-Sentinel**

OAK RIDGE - The Cold War arms race is going in reverse here. The Y-12 nuclear weapons plant is dismantling warheads like never before. The government's Oak Ridge facility may complete work on all stockpiled units associated with four different types of weapons by the end of the year. The exact number of warhead parts being taken apart is classified. However, Dan Linehan, a manager in Y-12's directed stockpile program, said workers may finish work on the W55, W48, W79 and W70 warheads by sometime this fall. Those warhead assemblies have been stored at Y-12 since the weapons were retired from the U.S. nuclear arsenal, in most cases decades ago.

[http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local\\_news/article/0,1406,KNS\\_347\\_5486483,00.html](http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5486483,00.html)

April 16, 2007

**U.S. nuclear energy push could generate more global competition for uranium, Mineweb**

RENO, NV - Austin, Texas, strategic consulting firm Stratfor suggests that a renewed push for U.S. nuclear energy "could lead to even more global competition for uranium and a boom in nuclear energy investment." The biggest stumbling block to domestic nuclear power is the lack of a nuclear storage facility, Stratfor warned in a recently published global market brief. The proposed Yucca Mountain national repository in Nevada remains stalled, while concerns about terrorism have slowed the Bush Administration's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) promoting the reprocessing of nuclear fuel. Meanwhile, the storage of nuclear waste at nuclear facilities has drawn substantial local opposition.

<http://www.mineweb.net/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/page31?oid=19549&sn=Detail>

April 13, 2007

**NRC license granted to planned uranium enrichment plant, *Associated Press***  
PIKETON, Ohio - The Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Friday issued a construction and operating license for USEC Inc.'s American Centrifuge Plant, which will enrich uranium in southern Ohio. Enrichment is the process by which uranium is made into fuel for nuclear power plants. The license is good for 30 years. USEC, based in Bethesda, Md., is developing the American Centrifuge enrichment project at a former atomic weapons plant in Piketon, about 65 miles south of Columbus. The company estimated the project would cost \$2.3 billion, and the plant would employ more than 400 people. "With plans under way for more than 30 new reactors around the country, a stable, domestic source of enriched uranium is vital," said John K. Welch, USEC president and chief executive officer. American Centrifuge is only the second major nuclear facility to be licensed in the past three decades under the NRC's licensing process for uranium enrichment facilities. USEC plans to begin operations at the plant in late 2009, concentrating uranium isotopes into forms that can be used as fuel. The project would also generate tons of radioactive waste - enough over 30 years to fill 41,000 cylinders weighing about 14 tons apiece, according to the NRC.  
<http://www.ohio.com/mld/beaconjournal/17075240.htm>

April 13, 2007

**DOE unlikely to get salts removed by deadline: Problems plague stalled cleanup at old reactor, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy will likely miss the Sept. 30 deadline for removing tons of highly radioactive fuel salts from the Molten Salt Reactor, making the agency subject to fines and penalties. "We're not prepared to change that milestone," said John Owsley, the state's environmental oversight chief in Oak Ridge. The cleanup project at the old nuclear reactor, which was shut down in 1969, has been running way behind schedule. Virtually no work has been done for the past year. A fluorine leak shut down all activities in May 2006. There have been other problems since then, including mandatory drug tests for all workers after marijuana was reportedly found in the parking lot. There is a plan to restart work at the site next month, but the near-term focus will be on removing the uranium-233 from the fuel mixture - not on removing the 9 tons of radioactive salts stored in the reactor's basement.  
[http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local\\_news/article/0,1406,KNS\\_347\\_5481726,00.html](http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5481726,00.html)

April 12, 2007

**Hanford building set for demolition, *Tri-City Herald***

After 428 "dives" by Hanford workers into the vaults beneath the Plutonium Finishing Plant's Liquid Waste Treatment Facility, the Cold War relic is ready to come down. It will be the second of nine highly contaminated buildings at the Plutonium Finishing Plant to be demolished and likely the last to be demolished for several years. "The surface contamination when we started (was) pretty much off the scale," said project manager Brian Skeels of Fluor Hanford. In many cases, radiation levels were too high for instruments to read when cleanup work started. And the air within the vaults was contaminated at levels 30,000 times what workers are allowed to breathe without respirators. The Plutonium Finishing Plant began operating in 1949 to make plutonium produced in Hanford reactors into metal buttons the size of hockey pucks for shipment to the nation's production plants for nuclear weapons. The 241-Z Liquid Waste Treatment Facility opened when the main plant did, collecting waste with acids and plutonium from the plant in five underground tanks and treating it for disposal. Although the Plutonium Finishing Plant stopped operating in 1989, the

waste treatment facility was used as recently as 2004 to hold liquid waste from stabilizing plutonium and cleanup.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8786984p-8688390c.html>

April 11, 2007

**Nevada says Yucca Mountain computer requirements thwart review, *Las Vegas Sun***

LAS VEGAS (AP) - The computer requirements to run the Energy Department's performance program for a national nuclear waste repository are so complex that they may thwart state review of the government's work, a Nevada official said. A simulation that aims to forecast whether Yucca Mountain can safely hold thousands of tons of nuclear waste needs a network of 30 master servers and 298 process servers - or a total of 752 processors operating in tandem, said Bob Loux, chief of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects. "No participant can reasonably expect to duplicate" the computer cluster, Loux said in a letter sent Tuesday to Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Dale Klein. "The model is so complicated and so large, and takes so many computers to run it," Loux said, "that it is fundamentally not checkable by any third party, including the NRC staff." The allegation represents the newest challenge in Nevada's fight against accepting 77,000 tons or more of the nation's most radioactive waste for burial at Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/nevada/2007/apr/11/041110044.html>

April 6, 2007

**State to discuss cleanup deadlines, *Tri-City Herald***

Washington has agreed to enter high-level negotiations with the Department of Energy over missed legal deadlines for cleanup at the Hanford nuclear reservation rather than moving toward legal action. "It doesn't mean we've ruled out going to court but before we do that we will see if we can negotiate an agreement," said Andy Fitz, a Washington state assistant attorney general. Among the state's concerns is the delay in constructing the \$12.2 billion vitrification plant to treat some of Hanford's worst wastes. The plant may not open until 2019, eight years past a legal deadline. On May 29 top officials with decision-making authority from DOE, the state and the Environmental Protection Agency will meet in the Tri-Cities to start negotiations. James Rispoli, DOE assistant secretary for environmental management; Jay Manning, director of the Washington state Department of Ecology, and Rob McKenna, Washington state attorney general, are expected to be at the table, among others. The state has seen three options for resolving the issue of missed deadlines, McKenna said. They range from "throwing up our hands and accepting the delay" to taking DOE to court to get deadlines enforced, he said. But it has settled on a middle option of attempting to negotiate a solution that recognizes DOE's budgetary and technical limitations, McKenna said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8769606p-8671039c.html>

April 6, 2007

**Yucca project procurement office altered: Changes take place after protest lodged against award of contract, *Las Vegas Review Journal***

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Energy has reorganized the Yucca Mountain procurement office, two months after the award of a \$495,000 consulting contract that has been criticized by lawmakers and challenged by a bidder who was passed over. The formal protest effectively has frozen the contract that was given in February to Longenecker & Associates to review engineering aspects of the government's bid to license a Nevada nuclear waste repository. "The protest must be

resolved before work can be undertaken," DOE spokesman Allen Benson said. The identity of the bidder, the stated grounds for the protest, and information about how the matter is being handled were not immediately made available by DOE officials. The contract protest was divulged at the same time that DOE officials announced two new contracts totaling \$3 million for outside consultants to review key parts of the repository program. Department officials also confirmed a personnel shift in the Yucca procurement operation that was carried out last week.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/6901282.html>

April 4, 2007

**Environment Department issues monitoring requirements for LANL, *New Mexico Business Weekly***

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has issued requirements to Los Alamos National Laboratory detailing improvements the agency wants to see in LANL's groundwater monitoring network. Deficiencies in the monitoring network are hampering the lab's ability to detect contamination from polluted sites at LANL. These include improperly drilled and constructed wells, according to NMED Secretary Ron Curry.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/albuquerque/stories/2007/04/02/daily23.html>

April 3, 2007

**DOE will do Hanford environmental assessment, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer***

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) – In an abrupt reversal, the federal government has agreed to begin assessing the damage to natural resources caused by plutonium production at the Hanford nuclear reservation, the nation's most contaminated nuclear site, The Associated Press has learned. Such injury assessments typically cost millions of dollars and often serve as a precursor to paying monetary damages. In 2002, the Yakama Nation sued the U.S. Department of Energy, which manages Hanford cleanup, seeking restoration of soil, water, plant and animal life that may have been damaged by radioactive waste and other hazardous substances. The Nez Perce Tribe later joined the lawsuit, as did Washington and Oregon. The Energy Department fought back, arguing it was too soon to determine if there were injuries to the environment or whether reparations should be paid. But the agency said Tuesday it would begin assessing those damages in collaboration with two other federal agencies, the states and the Indian tribes.

[http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/310247\\_hanford04.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/310247_hanford04.html)

April 3, 2007

**ORNL readies reactor for restart, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - After being idle for more than a year, the world's most powerful research reactor could be back in operation this spring. Kelly Beierschmitt, director of nuclear operations at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, said restart of the High Flux Isotope Reactor is tentatively scheduled for May 8-9. That schedule depends on the outcome of a readiness review by the U.S. Department of Energy. The DOE safety review is supposed to start Monday and will probably last a couple of weeks, Beierschmitt said. If the inspection team identifies any issues that require fixing, that could take another couple of weeks, he said.

[http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local\\_news/article/0,1406,KNS\\_347\\_5460211,00.html](http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5460211,00.html)

April 2, 2007

**Department of Energy Extends Opportunity for Public Comment on the Scope of the GNEP Environmental Impact Statement, *DOE Press Release* – The**

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced it has extended the time to submit comments on the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) from April 4, 2007 to June 4, 2007. DOE is extending the time for submittal of comments on the proposed scope, alternatives, and environmental issues to be analyzed in the GNEP PEIS. DOE will publish its notice in the Federal Register on April 3, 2007.

<http://energy.gov/news/4923.htm>