

## News from Around the Complex

*August 1 – August 31, 2007*

Available on-line at <http://www.fftfcleanupnews.org/news.htm>

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August 30, 2007

### **Review of nuke facility tentatively scheduled, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

As federal regulators are poised to amend a policy that has kept information on an East Tennessee nuclear fuel producer from the public, several area residents have called for a public hearing on the facility with a troubled past. They may have their first opportunity for public participation at a performance review tentatively scheduled for September. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's staff has recommended that the agency's four commissioners change a policy that has made nearly 12,000 documents from Nuclear Fuel Services of Erwin, Tenn., and another facility "official use only," effectively hiding them from public view. The NRC enacted the secrecy policy in 2004 at the request of the U.S. Department of Energy, which was concerned that sensitive, security-related information was publicly available in NRC documents.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/aug/30/review-of-uke-facility-tentatively-scheduled/>

August 27, 2007

### **Environment Department Seeks Public Comment on Draft Hazardous Waste Permit for Los Alamos National Laboratory, *New Mexico Environment Department Press Release***

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) released for public comment today a draft hazardous waste facility operating permit for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The permit governs LANL's operation of 27 waste management units and the closure of three disposal units at the facility. \*\*\*The historic fence-to-fence March 1, 2005 cleanup order governs ongoing environmental cleanup, and the draft permit requires cleanup activities after the order terminates as well ensuring the safe handling, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste at the facility. The draft permit also establishes closure milestones and requirements for hazardous and radioactive waste landfills at Technical Area 54. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the owner of LANL, continues to allow disposal of radioactive waste in one of these landfills, known as Area G.

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/OOTS/documents/2007-08-27.pdf>

August 24, 2007

### **Hanford put on dump site list, *The Oregonian***

The Hanford Nuclear Reservation is on the federal government's short list of sites for storing radioactive waste that could include contaminated metal from more than 100 U.S. nuclear plants. The waste, classified as low level, also includes radioactive detritus from medical procedures and research projects. But by far the most radioactive components would be waste from decommissioned nuclear plants and from the West Valley Demonstration Project near Buffalo, N.Y., where the government is cleaning up a former nuclear fuel reprocessing center. The amount of radiation in the inventory of current and projected waste is 140 million curies, equal to the contamination estimated from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown, or about three-quarters of the radiation contained in 177 leak-prone underground tanks at Hanford.

<http://www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/news/1187924133238940.xml&coll=7>

August 23, 2007

**New nuke facility closer, Knoxville News-Sentinel**

OAK RIDGE — Federal officials have approved the start of design work on a new production center, and a Y-12 spokesman acknowledged this week that the project's cost could reach \$3.5 billion — far more than previous estimates. Steven Wyatt, a spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration in Oak Ridge, said there is no firm price tag for the Uranium Processing Facility at this point, but he said the cost range for the project is \$1.4 billion to \$3.5 billion. The highest previous estimate disclosed publicly was \$2 billion, which Y-12 general manager George Dials reported during a meeting with the News Sentinel earlier this year. At the time, Dials said the working estimates ranged from \$1.4 billion to \$2 billion. When first proposed a few years ago, Y-12 officials said they expected the UPF to cost about \$1 billion.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/aug/23/new-uke-facility-closer/>

August 22, 2007

**Department of Energy Awards \$3.8 Million in Funding to 38 U.S. Universities for Nuclear Research Infrastructure, DOE Press Release**

WASHINGTON, DC — The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today strengthened its commitment to advancing nuclear power by awarding \$100,000 to 38 universities to enhance nuclear research and development (R&D) under President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). The one-time GNEP University Readiness awards total \$3.8 million in funding and will include upgrading laboratories; improving reactor facilities; purchasing state-of-the-art equipment; providing increased faculty support and further enhancing nuclear-related curricula. GNEP is part of a President Bush's Advanced Energy Initiative and aims to close the nuclear fuel cycle by reducing proliferation risks, reducing waste and further increasing energy security around the world.

<http://energy.gov/news/5311.htm>

August 22, 2007

**DOE official discusses future of SRS, Aiken Standard**

The Savannah River Site, and with it the Aiken community, will play a "viable and robust role" in the Department of Energy's plans for the foreseeable future, a high-ranking federal official said Tuesday evening while speaking at a dinner in Aiken. James Rispoli, assistant secretary of Energy for Environmental Management, addressed a crowd consisting mostly of leaders in the local nuclear community while speaking at the Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness event. Rispoli touched on a number of topics dealing with his office of Environmental Management and SRS, including his belief that the site's H-Canyon — where disposition of legacy nuclear materials occurs — should remain operational until 2019.\*\*\*While his visit to the area came during the budget-cycle for DOE, Rispoli was unable to address the specifics of how much money his office is requesting because those numbers are currently embargoed. However, he did point to a five-year plan released by the department last February that he said would be a good indicator to its upcoming budget requests. According to that plan, said Rispoli, the Environmental Management office will receive a little less than \$6 billion in the upcoming budget, down from more than \$7 billion several years ago. However the upcoming budget will serve as a low point in the five-year financial plan for the office, with the budget rebounding in subsequent years.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/289646589122671.php>

August 22, 2007

**Formation of citizens advisory board proposed for enrichment plant oversight, *Chillicothe Gazette (Ohio)***

Opponents of Piketon uranium enrichment plant activities now may have an advisory role in actions taken by the U.S. Energy Department. "We have been calling for this for years," said Geoffrey Sea, of the Southern Ohio Neighbors Group (SONG). "Piketon is the only (Department of Energy) site that has never had a Citizens Advisory Board. It's also one of the poorest in terms of income." At an update meeting of environmental cleanup efforts conducted by the Energy Department, project manager Bill Murphie discussed the importance of public input in plant decisions. "The local citizens groups need to get together," Murphie said. "We have had citizens groups form at other (Department of Energy) sites and we can put them in touch with you. But the business groups need to get together alongside the citizens groups to be credible."

<http://www.chillicothegazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070822/NEWS01/708220301>

August 21, 2007

**Nuclear alliance quandary, *The Age (Australia)***

SENIOR Government players are exploring whether Australia can become part of a controversial global nuclear alliance in a special deal whereby the country would not be required to take back radioactive waste. Sources have told *The Age* discussions are under way that could see Australia and Canada made part of the powerful Washington-led Global Nuclear Energy Partnership on a "parallel" track, without having to assume full membership of the organisation. The Bush Administration has made it plain to the Howard Government informally that it would like Australia to be part of the GNEP — which is an alliance designed to restrict the number of countries enriching uranium to current players, such as the US, Britain, France and Russia.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/nuclear-alliance-quandary/2007/08/20/1187462178230.html>

August 20, 2007

**K-25 cleanup: Not till 2010, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE — K-25 is coming down, but not anytime soon. Even with 800 people working 50-hour weeks, the demolition won't be accomplished until the end of 2010, according to the latest estimates. That's more than two years beyond the original schedule and still doesn't include the work on K-27 — a sister building that's also to be torn down as part of the massive cleanup project. Taking apart K-25 is proving almost as big a challenge as building it in the first place. Dennis Hill, a spokesman for Bechtel Jacobs Co., the Department of Energy's cleanup manager in Oak Ridge, said the team is making "significant progress."

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/aug/20/k-25-cleanup-not-till-2010/>

August 19, 2007

**Leaks reported at S.C. nuclear dump: Radioactive tritium in groundwater exceeds EPA safe-drinking levels, *Charlotte Observer***

Higher-than-expected amounts of a radioactive material are tainting the groundwater at a nuclear waste dump long considered safe by state regulators. Previously sealed records, obtained by The State newspaper, show groundwater beneath the state-owned landfill in Barnwell County has tritium levels exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for safe drinking water — in some cases by hundreds of times. Tritium levels beneath the 36-year-old landfill operated by Chem-Nuclear rival

those on parts of the Savannah River Site, records show. SRS is a nearby atomic weapons complex with a well-documented history of groundwater pollution.  
[http://www.charlotte.com/breaking\\_news/story/242647.html](http://www.charlotte.com/breaking_news/story/242647.html)

August 17, 2007

**DOE works on high-level probe of radioactive spill at Hanford**, *Tri-City Herald*  
Department of Energy officials in Washington, D.C., have launched an investigation into the late-July spill of radioactive waste in central Hanford. Hanford nuclear reservation employees were told Thursday that DOE's Office of Health, Safety and Security has started a Type A investigation. Such investigations are reserved for the most serious safety-related incidents. An estimated 50 to 100 gallons of mixed hazardous chemical and high-level radioactive waste was spilled in the early morning hours of July 27 in central Hanford. Workers were using a new pump to empty waste from a leak-prone single-shell tank when the pump clogged.\*\*\*The investigation will determine the cause and circumstances surrounding the spill from Tank S-102 and evaluate the effectiveness of management processes, said Shirley Olinger, acting manager of DOE's Hanford Office of River Protection, in a message to employees.  
<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9227247p-9143109c.html>

August 16, 2007

**UC shares Fernald radiation data: Research conducted over 17 years**, *The Cincinnati Post*  
Nearly two decades of observations of thousands of people who lived near a Cold War uranium-refining plant will be shared by the University of Cincinnati with other researchers in an effort to further understand the health effects of low-level radiation. In one of the nation's longest such studies, the Fernald Medical Monitoring Program is drawing to an end after 17 years of collecting data from more than 9,500 people who lived near the Feed Materials Production Center at Fernald in Crosby Township.  
<http://news.cincypost.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070816/NEWS01/708160370>

August 16, 2007

**Judge questions sudden rush on Yucca drilling**, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*  
U.S. District Judge Roger Hunt pressed a Justice Department attorney Wednesday to explain why the Department of Energy after 20 years is suddenly rushing to drill bore holes to collect rock samples at the planned Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site. Nevertheless, he urged the state and federal attorneys to try to reach a compromise while he weighs arguments on the Justice Department's motion to allow DOE to continue using the state's water for the project. During the hearing, Hunt noted that the federal energy agency had ignored State Engineer Tracy Taylor's order to stop using Nevada's water without involving the court or attorneys for the parties, "which I find quite frankly is a little disingenuous."  
<http://www.lvrj.com/news/9192497.html>

August 16, 2007

**Little support for new waste at LANL**, *LA Monitor*  
At a public meeting Tuesday evening, one person spoke in favor of burying an orphaned class of nuclear waste in New Mexico. At the first-stage environmental planning session sponsored by the Department of Energy, Mike Dempsey was outnumbered 10-to-one by the opponents of nuclear-waste disposal at Los Alamos. Another speaker urged that the decision be made on the basis of science, rather than politics. At issue is where the nation should put about 2,600 cubic meters of "Greater

Than Class C (GTCC) low-level radioactive waste" regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as well as an additional 3,000 cubic meters of similar, "GTCC-like" wastes that are owned or generated by DOE. Under current regulations, GTCC waste is supposed to be buried in a geological repository such as WIPP or Yucca Mountain, but the DOE project is also considering various "near surface" and "intermediate depth borehole" options.

[http://www.lamonitor.com/articles/2007/08/16/headline\\_news/news03.txt](http://www.lamonitor.com/articles/2007/08/16/headline_news/news03.txt)

August 15, 2007

**DOE clears vit plant building restart, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Energy on Tuesday ordered restart of full construction within 30 days on Hanford's massive vitrification plant. Construction on key parts of the plant that will treat high-level radioactive waste had been halted since January 2006 while DOE confirmed the design was adequate to withstand a severe earthquake. In addition, Congress had passed legislation saying no money appropriated for fiscal 2007 could be spent on those parts of the plant until Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman had approved the final standard needed to keep the plant safe from earthquakes. Bodman signed off on the earthquake standards based on a new study by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory on Friday. "The department plans to initiate activities to restart construction on the Pretreatment Facility and the High-Level Waste Facility," he wrote in a letter notifying Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9221660p-9137785c.html>

August 14, 2007

**Idaho lab cleanup sends Rocky Flats waste to N.M. site, *Denver Post***

Idaho Falls, Idaho - Crews have begun excavating Cold War-era weapons waste from a second burial site at the U.S. Department of Energy's Radioactive Waste Management Complex in the eastern Idaho desert. Cleanup work at the facility, within the 890-square-mile Idaho National Laboratory, began in 2005. So far, the recovery project has focused on excavating radioactive and hazardous wastes, repackaging the materials, then shipping them in trucks for permanent disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. The majority of the waste material came from the Rocky Flats nuclear-weapons plant near Denver. From the 1950s through 1970, the waste materials were shipped in drums to Idaho and buried in a 97-acre section of the INL facility, said Amy Lientz, spokeswoman for the Idaho Cleanup Project. For the past two years, workers have concentrated on wastes buried in a single pit about 20 feet below the desert surface.

[http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci\\_6616173](http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_6616173)

August 13, 2007

**Residents support possible new type of waste, *Carlsbad Current-Argus***

CARLSBAD — In the first step toward determining whether the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant should be the destination of 5,600 cubic meters of radioactive waste, the U.S. Department of Energy last night conducted a public forum at Carlsbad's Pecos River Village Conference Center to gauge public sentiment toward such a move. The Department of Energy is seeking to dispose of 2,600 cubic meters of non-defense waste from commercial sources - decommissioned nuclear power plants, radioactive sealed sources no longer being used in such activities as food irradiation and medical procedures, and waste from industry research and development - designated as "Greater Than Class C" or "GTCC" waste. The additional 3,000 cubic meters has similar contents but unspecified origins. The amount of waste in question is relatively small compared to the 175,000 cubic meters of defense-related nuclear waste authorized for WIPP. The site itself is currently not authorized, through legislation or

regulation, for this type of waste. If WIPP were to become authorized, however, the increase in waste would not exceed the volume of what is currently allowed at the [http://www.currentargus.com/news/ci\\_6616692](http://www.currentargus.com/news/ci_6616692)

August 12, 2007

**Fight brews over Yucca Mountain database, *Mohave Daily News***

LAS VEGAS (AP) - Battle lines are being drawn in a dispute over whether the Energy Department is providing complete information about plans to open and operate a national nuclear waste dump in Nevada. The state and 13 environmental groups say the government hasn't met requirements for posting information on a key database before it applies to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for an operating license for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. The Energy Department calls that claim unfounded and off-base. It's backed by the pro-repository Nuclear Energy Institute and NRC staff members. The dispute has been aired in legal documents filed recently for consideration by a three-judge Nuclear Regulatory Commission administrative panel. Lawyers have clashed off and on for three years over the ground rules for reviewing millions of pages of documents relating to the government's bid to license the repository at the Yucca site, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

<http://www.mohavedailynews.com/articles/2007/08/13/news/local/local3.txt>

August 11, 2007

**Problems shut new ETP facility, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE — The government invested \$4 million in a new wastewater treatment facility at the East Tennessee Technology Park to replace an aging unit scheduled for demolition and to support continued operations at the toxic-waste incinerator. However, the new system was six months late coming online, and it only operated for about a week — July 3-July 11 — before it had to be shut down for repairs. "As is often the case with the startup of new facilities, several operational problems occurred during startup," said Dennis Hill, a spokesman for Bechtel Jacobs Co., the U.S. Department of Energy's cleanup manager in Oak Ridge.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/aug/11/problems-shut-new-ettp-facility/>

August 4, 2007

**Y-12 to restart rolling, forming, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE — "Rolling-and-forming" operations with enriched uranium will resume next week at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant for the first time since 2004, a spokesman confirmed. Bill Wilburn of BWXT Y-12, the contractor managing the warhead production facility for the federal government, said the operations are needed to evaluate the quality of the product from a new uranium-processing technology. Y-12 is the nation's primary storehouse for weapons-grade uranium. The Oak Ridge plant manufactures nuclear warhead parts from uranium and other materials, specializing in so-called secondaries — the second stage of thermonuclear bombs.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/aug/04/y-12-to-restart-rolling-forming/>

August 4, 2007

**GAO: Prospects 'unclear' for quality of Yucca Mountain license, *Casper Star Tribune***

WASHINGTON -- It's unclear whether the Energy Department will be able to submit a sufficiently high-quality Yucca Mountain license application by its self-imposed mid-2008 deadline, congressional investigators reported Friday. By law, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission must render a decision on whether to authorize construction of the nuclear waste dump 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas within four years of

receiving the Energy Department's application for an operating license. But in order to act within that time frame, NRC depends on receiving a "high quality" application containing all the necessary technical and scientific backup. In a report issued Friday, the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, cast doubt on whether that would be possible.

<http://www.casperstartribune.net/articles/2007/08/04/news/regional/139d7a20a290d0108725732c007ee0be.txt>

Report Available at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071010.pdf>

August 3, 2007

**EnergySolutions' bid to clean up, then buy uranium plants raises eyebrows in Congress, Salt Lake Tribune**

The chairman of Congress' powerful Energy and Commerce Committee is asking questions about efforts by Salt Lake City-based EnergySolutions to get an exclusive cleanup contract for two government-owned uranium enrichment plants. If EnergySolutions gets the \$9.5 billion contract at the Ohio and Kentucky plants, the Utah nuclear service company also plans to buy the Maryland-based company that now leases and operates those sites, according to Rep. John Dingell, D-MI. For EnergySolutions, the deal could be a boon, guaranteeing \$700 million a year in business from the U.S. Energy Department and giving the company leverage for still more expansion. The company, which has been growing exponentially since 2005, would also further the stated goal of its chief executive officer, Steve Creamer, to dominate the U.S. nuclear services industry. But the deal might not be in the best interests of taxpayers, says Dingell and fellow Michigan Democrat Bart Stupak, who leads the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_6532908](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_6532908)

August 2, 2007

**Construction Begins on MOX, Aiken Standard**

After several delays, Wednesday marked the first day of construction for the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility at the Savannah River Site. Construction was initiated by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). NNSA is an organization within the Department of Defense [*sic*] responsible for increasing national security through the military application of nuclear science. It was established by Congress in 2000. The new facility is being created in an effort to fulfill the U.S.-Russian Plutonium Disposition Agreement made in 2000, during which the United States and Russia both agreed to dispose of 34 metric tons (about 75,000 pounds) of weapon-grade plutonium – an amount that could create about 17,000 nuclear weapons.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/334834493010600.php>

August 1, 2007

**New Nuclear Facility Undermines International Security: Energy Department Should Delay Construction, Science Group Says, Union of Concerned Scientists Press Release**

WASHINGTON (August 1, 2007)—The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) today condemned the Department of Energy for proceeding with construction of a \$5 billion South Carolina plant designed to turn plutonium into mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel for U.S. nuclear reactors without honoring its commitment to make the plant available for inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Edwin Lyman, senior staff scientist in UCS's Global Security Program, said this move undermines the credibility of nuclear non-proliferation efforts at a time when the international community is struggling to stop the spread of nuclear weapons materials and

technologies around the world. In a letter sent to Energy Secretary Samuel L. Bodman, Lyman wrote, "...the U.S. has a responsibility to set the gold standard for safeguards and security as an example for Russia and for the rest of the world. Yet DOE has already failed to live up to that responsibility by shutting the IAEA out of the process for developing a safeguards regime for the MOX plant prior to construction."

[http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press\\_release/new-nuclear-facility-0051.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/news/press_release/new-nuclear-facility-0051.html)

August 1, 2007

**Hanford spill traced to vulnerable water line: Nuclear waste - Crews were trying to clear a clogged pump when 50 to 100 gallons leaked out, officials say, *The Oregonian***

Federal officials traced a spill of highly radioactive waste at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation last week to a water line that was never intended to handle such a hazardous brew and delayed detection for hours. Attempts to unclog a pump plugged by nuclear waste as thick as chunky peanut butter inadvertently forced the sludge from an aging underground tank into the water line, which sprung a leak, spilling 50 to 100 gallons onto the ground, said Delmar Noyes of the U.S. Department of Energy. "This water line was never designed to contain or have waste injected into it," he said during a telephone conference call with reporters. It was the worst spill at Hanford in recent years as federal workers and hired contractors try to empty 149 deteriorating underground tanks filled with waste from the dawn of the nuclear age. Nearly half are suspected of leaking. Only seven tanks have been emptied.

<http://www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/news/118594052850880.xml&coll=7>