

## News from Around the Complex

*March 1 – March 31, 2008*

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

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March 31, 2008

### **Hanford workers digging up lost fuel pieces, *Tri-City Herald***

Hanford workers have unearthed 32 whole and 11 partial pieces of highly radioactive reactor fuel in burial grounds for reactor debris along the Columbia River. They are certain to find more, as digging is in progress or to begin at seven of the Hanford nuclear reservation's 11 major burial grounds for reactor debris. "This shows why Ecology, and also the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, wants the burial grounds dug up," said John Price, environmental restoration project manager for the Washington state Department of Ecology. When pumps, tongs, the spacers used between fuel pieces inside reactors and other debris were buried during World War II and the Cold War, their disposal was assumed to be permanent. But current environmental standards call for restoring the areas along the river to their condition before Hanford was used to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. Without cleanup, a person who unknowingly digs up the irradiated fuel pieces 1,000 years from now would be exposed to harmful levels of radiation, Price said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/142427.html>

March 28, 2008

### **DOE Awards \$18.3 Million to Nuclear Industry Consortia for GNEP Studies, *DOE Press Release***

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) this week awarded \$18.3 million to four industry teams to further develop plans for an initial nuclear fuel recycling center and advanced recycling reactor as part of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Today's awards include \$5.9 million to EnergySolutions; \$5.7 million to the International Nuclear Recycling Alliance, led by AREVA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries; \$5.5 million to General Electric-Hitachi; and \$1.3 million to General Atomics. These firms will further develop detailed studies that build on conceptual design studies, technology development roadmaps, business plans submitted earlier this year by these four industry consortia.

<http://energy.gov/news/6100.htm>

March 28, 2008

### **EPA is asked to move radioactive waste, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch***

BRIDGETON — Community members urged federal environmental regulators Thursday to remove radioactive waste from a local landfill which they say is vulnerable to flooding from the nearby Missouri River. Those comments were made during a meeting sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, which is once again seeking public input on its plan for the 200-acre West Lake landfill, a Superfund site slated for federal cleanup. The public has until April 9 to give comments on the proposed cleanup plan. By-products of uranium ore processing from the old Mallinckrodt Chemical Works' facility near downtown St. Louis were stored near Lambert Field and later blended with soil that ended up in the municipal landfill in the 1970s. Rather than hauling the waste off-site, EPA officials proposed in 2006 to leave it there and place rock and rubble over the landfill to contain the waste. Since then, however, the agency has received many comments regarding the

landfill's location in a floodplain. Some have questioned whether the Earth City levee, which is about one mile west of the landfill, might someday fail.

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/stlouiscitycounty/story/>

March 28, 2008

**Plutonium makes its way out of Livermore: Relocation of nuclear material to be completed by 2012, *Tri-Valley Herald***

LIVERMORE — Another shipment of weapons-grade nuclear material has made its way out of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the National Nuclear Security Administration reported Thursday. Together with two previous shipments, this brings the total amount of plutonium and highly-enriched uranium down 25 percent. The time and method of such shipments are not released. The lab is on track to completely shed its nuclear material by 2012 as part of the NNSA's plan to consolidate the material at fewer sites to reduce the cost of protecting it. The recent shipment went to the Savannah River Site in North Carolina, but the type of plutonium work that currently is done at Livermore Lab will be done at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico in the future.

[http://www.insidebayarea.com/trivalleyherald/localnews/ci\\_8726767](http://www.insidebayarea.com/trivalleyherald/localnews/ci_8726767)

March 25, 2008

**Court requires INL to remove nuclear waste: Decision upheld in circuit court to remove all transuranic waste, *Times-News (Twin Falls)***

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has affirmed an earlier federal district court decision requiring the federal government to remove all transuranic nuclear waste from the Idaho National Laboratory near Idaho Falls. The ruling is a victory for the state of Idaho, which has pushed the federal government to remove buried nuclear waste from the site since the late 1980s, and a setback for the federal government, which has said removing all the waste is unnecessary and too expensive. "We're happy about this, of course," said Curt Fransen, deputy director of the state's Department of Environmental Quality. The decision from the three-judge panel means the federal Department of Energy will have to remove tens of thousands of cubic meters of nuclear waste from the site by 2018, Fransen said. The DOE had proposed removing just a fraction of the waste. The case stems from a 1995 agreement between the state and the federal government brokered by then-Gov. Phil Batt. In the deal, commonly called the Batt Agreement, the feds agreed to remove all transuranic waste at the site. But shortly after the agreement was reached, the federal government began to question what it had agreed to.

[http://www.magicvalley.com/articles/2008/03/25/news/local\\_state/133467.txt](http://www.magicvalley.com/articles/2008/03/25/news/local_state/133467.txt)

March 23, 2008

**Nuclear industry to push stopgap waste sites, *Las Vegas Sun***

Washington — \*\*\* The last nuclear plants were built 30 years ago, but as the nation hungers for new power sources — particularly those that do not increase the carbon footprint — nuclear energy emerges as an increasingly attractive option. But what to do with the nuclear waste is still a problem. Nevadans have fought for more than 20 years the government's proposal to build the nation's nuclear waste repository 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Odds are they are winning. The dump was supposed to open 10 years ago, and now isn't projected to open until after 2017. Patience is wearing thin. The industry wants new nuclear power plants and wants a solution for the waste. Now, the Nuclear Energy Institute, the main trade group representing the industry, is trying a new approach. The institute is quietly talking to communities across the nation to see if they are interested in hosting a temporary waste storage site — perhaps not just a dump, but a nuclear industrial park that could support

ancillary businesses and bring in jobs. The institute envisions two, maybe four, sites in rural communities that might see something in it for them. These sites wouldn't replace the need for a long-term repository at Yucca Mountain, the institute is quick to add, but would be caretakers of the waste for the next 100 years.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/mar/23/institute-whistling-new-tune-nuke-waste/>

March 21, 2008

**K East Basin goes dry, eliminates top risk to Columbia River, *Tri-City Herald***  
Hanford's leak-prone K East Basin is dry for the first time since production of plutonium began at the reactor during the Cold War. "That's an achievement," said Larry Gadbois, environmental scientist for the Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates the K Basins. Less than two months ago the basin, which is 400 yards from the Columbia River, held 1 million gallons of radioactive water. Although more cleanup work remains to be done at the K Basins, including treating radioactive sludge for disposal and cleaning up contaminated soil beneath the basins, removal of the water eliminates a major risk to the river.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/133921.html>

March 21, 2008

**Troubled Hanford cleanup has state mulling lawsuit, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer***  
The hose ruptured just after 2 a.m. in July at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, spilling 85 gallons of radioactive waste being pumped from a decaying underground tank. It wasn't until 9:45 a.m. -- more than seven hours later -- that workers even realized that a spill had occurred. They could not have imagined that such a relatively small spill -- a result of shoddy planning and inadequate equipment testing -- would have such large repercussions. It brought to a halt millions of dollars of cleanup activities that are yet to resume, crippling the pace of an already sluggish project. Nor could they have realized the danger that they had put themselves in. Workers noticed a bad smell and soon began complaining of symptoms. Ultimately, two dozen workers sought medical care for irritated eyes and breathing, coughing episodes to the point of vomiting, nausea and a sensation of burning skin. The spill was just one more worrisome chapter in a long book of cleanup woes at Hanford, but the episode is emblematic of the tangle that the cleanup has become, marked by acrimony, finger-pointing and threats of lawsuits. Some of the delays can be rightly blamed on too little funding, but other setbacks are the fault of poor management, failed equipment, engineering miscalculations, subpar work and injuries.

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/355924\\_hanford21.html?source=rss](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/355924_hanford21.html?source=rss)

March 19, 2008

**Y-12 getting more stocks of highly enriched uranium, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***  
As part of the first phase (2005-07) of the government's plan to consolidate its bomb-making materials, the Y-12 National Security Complex received a little bit of uranium from Sandia National Laboratories. Federal spokesman Steven Wyatt characterized it as a "relatively small amount of reusable highly enriched uranium." As part of the second phase of the same program, the Oak Ridge plant is going to get a lot more - "It will be a much more significant amount," according to Wyatt - from other facilities, including Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and the Pantex Plant in Texas. OK, I know this doesn't tell you much, but you know how the government is with its secrets - especially its nuclear secrets.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/mar/19/y-12-getting-more-stocks-of-highly-enriched/>

March 18, 2008

**DOE Announces Strategic Engineering and Technology Roadmap for Cleanup of Cold War Era Nuclear Waste, *DOE Press Release***

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today released an Engineering and Technology Roadmap (Roadmap), which details initiatives aimed at reducing the technical risks and uncertainties associated with cleaning up Cold War era nuclear waste over the next ten years. The Roadmap also outlines strategies to minimize such risks and proposes how these strategies would be implemented, furthering the Department's goal of protecting the environment by providing a responsible resolution to the environmental legacy of nuclear weapons production.

<http://energy.gov/news/6089.htm>

March 17, 2008

**Reactor cleanup making progress: Nuke material removal at Molten Salt almost done after much delay, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - After years of technically challenging work, upsets and schedule delays, and tens of millions of taxpayer dollars, government contractors are about to complete a major milestone at the Molten Salt Reactor. Within the next couple of weeks, workers should have extracted the final quantities of uranium-233 from old fuel tanks at the reactor and shipped the fissile material - of potential use in nuclear weapons - to a secure site at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/mar/17/reactor-cleanup-making-progress/>

March 15, 2008

**DOE decision could send waste to Idaho, *Tri-City Herald***

Up to 9,000 containers of radioactive Hanford waste could be sent to Idaho for repackaging under a revised Department of Energy plan. DOE announced last week that it plans to make Idaho National Laboratory the nation's primary processing center for transuranic waste from nuclear sites that don't have their own processing capability. At Hanford, transuranic waste is typically building, laboratory and other debris contaminated with plutonium. It was temporarily buried after 1970 when Congress ordered the waste to be sent to a national repository but before the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, was opened in New Mexico to permanently dispose of the waste. By sending some Hanford waste to Idaho, DOE believes it can be packaged more efficiently than with the manual process that would have to be used at Hanford. The packaging allows fewer shipments to be made to WIPP and less of WIPP's limited disposal space to be filled. Much of Hanford's retrieved transuranic waste can be surveyed and packaged for shipment at Hanford. But contractor Fluor Hanford is retrieving increasingly corroded 55-gallon metal drums of waste that are so degraded they have to be slipped inside an 85-gallon overpack.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/118376.html>

March 14, 2008

**DOE Idea: Going Private With Nuke Waste, *Las Vegas Sun***

Energy Department officials trying to promote nuclear power are suggesting that private industry assume some responsibility for the country's nuclear waste. Edward F. "Ward" Sproat said Thursday that the idea could ensure more stable management and financial support for the long-delayed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump project in Nevada that he manages. "I do think that providing some sort of an organization with legislative fiat that provides that stability and fixes some of these institutional problems is a good idea," Sproat said after addressing a conference of nuclear regulators. "But it's got to be done right." He heads the Energy Department's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. Even Yucca Mountain supporters

say stability has been lacking at the 77,000-ton repository planned 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. It is intended as the resting place for the spent reactor fuel and high-level defense waste piling up at power plants and other sites around the country. Yucca Mountain's most ardent critic, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., is in position to engineer annual budget cuts of \$100 million or more.  
<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/mar/14/doe-idea-going-private-with-nuke-waste/>

March 13, 2008

**LANL should clean up before making pits, Curry says, *Las Cruces Sun-News***  
SANTA FE—Los Alamos National Laboratory should clean up its "legacy of pollution" before it produces more plutonium bomb parts, New Mexico's environment secretary said Thursday. Ron Curry said in a statement it's "unconscionable" that the U.S. Department of Energy and the lab's operators are considering funding additional plutonium pit production "while at the same time refusing to put the required funding towards cleanup." "Before it looks at new missions, the lab must meet its cleanup commitments to the people of New Mexico," Curry said. He issued the statement as the National Nuclear Security Administration holds a series of hearings on a proposal to consolidate operations from eight nuclear weapons sites around the country, creating "centers of excellence."  
[http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci\\_8564854](http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci_8564854)

March 12, 2008

**State says waste plan permissible: Proposal to import materials to OR remains controversial, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***  
OAK RIDGE - The state of Tennessee has determined there is no "technical reason" to prohibit EnergySolutions' plans to process Italian nuclear waste at the company's Oak Ridge facilities. In a March 4 letter to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the state's Division of Radiological Health indicated the proposed work falls within the Tennessee licenses held by EnergySolutions or its predecessor company, Duratek. The NRC asked for the state's input on the EnergySolutions application to import as much as 20,000 tons of waste from Italy. The low-level radioactive waste would be shipped to Oak Ridge initially and incinerated, smelted, compacted or otherwise processed there. Any residues would be transported to the company's landfill in Utah for disposal.  
<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/mar/12/state-says-waste-plan-permissible/>

March 11, 2008

**Groundwater cleanup to speed up at Hanford, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer***  
YAKIMA -- The federal government is accelerating cleanup of one plume of contaminated groundwater at the nation's most contaminated nuclear site in an effort to better protect aquatic life in the neighboring Columbia River. The project will triple the amount of groundwater treated for hexavalent chromium, a cancer-causing agent that was used as a corrosion inhibitor in nuclear reactors, at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The contaminant moves easily with water and is particularly dangerous to salmon in the region's largest waterway.  
[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/354678\\_hanford12.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/354678_hanford12.html)

March 10, 2008

**DOE Falls Behind In Cleanups: Cleanup of nuclear weapons sites is behind schedule and over budget, audit shows, but DOE cuts program, *Chemical and Engineering News***

Optimistic milestones in cleaning up the nuclear weapons complex cannot be met, the Department of Energy recently announced. With much fanfare, the Bush Administration set milestones just a few years ago. Now, DOE must begin renegotiating agreements reached with states to reflect new and more accurate costs and schedules revealed last year in a program-wide audit, says Assistant Secretary James A. Rispoli, who manages the agency's cleanup program. Hanford workers remove drums of radioactive waste from burial ground. The audit shows that the cost to clean up extensive radioactive and hazardous waste contamination is likely to be as high as \$305 billion, more than \$50 billion higher than the Administration's earlier estimate. It also may take until 2062 to finish the job—more than 20 years longer than original estimates. Yet this year's cleanup budget proposal is \$5.5 billion, the lowest level in the last 15 years for the huge cleanup program.

<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/government/86/8610gov2.html>

March 9, 2008

**Minister admits total failure of Sellafield 'MOX' plant,** *The Independent (UK)*

It was a deeply embarrassing moment for the Government, though it passed almost without notice. Late last month, the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks, had to admit to one of the most comprehensive and catastrophic failures in British industrial history – and one that has led directly to the plans to ship weapons-ready plutonium to France. Answering a question from Dai Davies, the independent MP for Blaenau Gwent, Mr. Wicks confessed that a new plant at Sellafield, built amid great controversy at a cost of £473m, had comprehensively failed to work. Originally designed to produce 120 tons a year of "mixed oxide" (MOX) nuclear fuel – made of plutonium and uranium separated from nuclear waste by reprocessing – it had in fact managed only 5.3 tons in five years of operation.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/minister-admits-total-failure-of-sellafield-mox-plant-793489.html>

March 9, 2008

**Senate panel adds funds for Mound, Piketon: Budget committee approves an additional \$500 million for cleanups at former nuclear sites,** *Dayton Daily News*

The Senate budget committee has approved an additional \$500 million for the Energy Department's program to clean up former nuclear sites such as Miamisburg's Mound Plant and the old uranium enrichment plant in Piketon. A spokeswoman for U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, who pushed for the funds, said the budget bill is expected to be on the Senate floor this week. The extra funding brings the department's entire environmental cleanup program for fiscal 2009 to \$6 billion, still down from 2006 levels of \$7.3 billion. The measure restores a quarter of the \$2 billion President Bush had proposed cutting from the program.

<http://www.daytondailynews.com/n/content/oh/story/news/local/2008/03/08/ddn030908mound.html?cxtype=rss&cxsvc=7&cxcat=16>

March 6, 2008

**Energy Department to ship nuclear waste to Idaho for treatment,** *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

BOISE, Idaho -- The U.S. Department of Energy will begin shipping nuclear waste to the Idaho National Laboratory for treatment before sending it on to a waste storage site in New Mexico, department officials told The Associated Press on Thursday. The department's record of decision amends department policy so that transuranic waste can be shipped to Idaho from sites around the country so workers can prepare it for storage at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, N.M. Transuranic waste

includes gloves, rags and other debris contaminated with radioactive material that takes thousands of years to decay to safe levels. The change is allowed under a provision in a 1995 lawsuit settlement agreement between the state and the federal government that permits transuranic waste from other states to be treated at INL as long as it leaves Idaho within a year of its arrival.

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap\\_wst\\_inl\\_nuclear\\_waste.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap_wst_inl_nuclear_waste.html)

March 2008

**Bush Calls for More GNEP, MOX Facility Funds, Arms Control Today**

President George W. Bush's fiscal 2009 budget request, unveiled Feb. 4, calls for a significant increase in funding for two controversial administration nuclear efforts: the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) and a new mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel facility at Savannah River, South Carolina. The administration made the request despite the fact that Congress significantly cut funds for both programs last year and key lawmakers continue to express skepticism about the initiatives. Administration officials have claimed that GNEP, which seeks to develop new nuclear technologies and new international nuclear fuel arrangements, will reduce nuclear waste and decrease the risk that anticipated growth in the use of nuclear energy worldwide could spur nuclear weapons proliferation. Critics assert that the administration's course would exacerbate the proliferation risks posed by the spread of reprocessing technology, be prohibitively expensive, and fail to ease waste disposal challenges significantly without any certainty that the claimed technologies will ever be developed.

[http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_03/GNEP.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_03/GNEP.asp)

March 3, 2008

**Hastings, House Members Work to Increase Nuclear Cleanup Budget, Press Release from Office of Congressman Doc Hastings**

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Doc Hastings today led a bipartisan group of lawmakers in urging the House Budget Committee to provide additional funding for the Environmental Management program in the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution. The Environmental Management program is responsible for cleaning up nuclear waste sites, including Hanford, that were created by the nation's World War II and Cold War era nuclear weapons production program. In a letter the lawmakers asked the Budget Committee for assistance in "reversing" the Administration's proposed cuts to the Environmental Management program and "restoring the nuclear cleanup budget to a responsible level of \$6.6 billion."

<http://hastings.house.gov/Read.aspx?ID=981>

March 3, 2008

**A Toxic Time Bomb in the Northwest, The Washington Post**

Buried in President Bush's proposed budget for next year is a story of broken promises. It's a story that puts our nation's honor -- and our environment, economy and families -- on the line. The president wants to increase spending on every major category of our government's nuclear program except one: cleaning up the toxic legacy that lurks at nuclear reservations and facilities around the nation. The administration wants more funding for nuclear weaponry, nuclear energy, nuclear science and management. But it would spend \$800 million less on environmental cleanups at 20 federal nuclear sites in 14 states. Its request for cleanups at nuclear sites in several states is the lowest since 1997.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/02/AR2008030201860.html>

March 2, 2008

**Cleanup may begin on radioactive waste spread by animals at Hanford, *Tri-City Herald***

Plans are being developed to start cleaning up Hanford's largest waste site later this year. It's the 13-square-mile "BC controlled area" near central Hanford, which is spotted with radioactive cesium 137 and strontium 90 even though none of Hanford's work to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program was done there. But it is just south of the BC cribs and trenches where 50 million gallons of liquid waste contaminated with radioactive salts were discharged during the Cold War. Animals attracted to the salts spread the waste across miles of the Hanford desert. "This area has a large spread of contamination on the surface with the ability to move around with our winds," said Matt McCormick, Department of Energy assistant manager for central Hanford cleanup. An engineering analysis prepared by Fluor Hanford for DOE concluded that the surface soil in contaminated spots should be dug up and hauled to a lined landfill for low-level radioactive waste a few miles to the west. DOE, the Washington state Department of Ecology and the Environmental Protection Agency are taking public comment on the plan until March 26.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/901/story/106285.html>

March 2, 2008

**West Texas radioactive waste site a hot topic: TCEQ scientists, citing water issue, want application for license denied, *Houston Chronicle***

AUSTIN — The executive director of the state's environmental agency is poised to recommend a radioactive waste dump in West Texas despite a report from agency scientists who said nearby groundwater makes the site unsuitable. Two geologists and two engineers who reviewed the proposed location in Andrews County, on the New Mexico border about 130 miles northwest of Midland, concluded in August that the license application by Waste Control Specialists, a politically connected Dallas firm, should be denied. They said one water table may be closer than 14 feet, making it "highly likely" that water could seep into the dump as annual rainfall increases due to climate change. "Analysis of available data shows that groundwater in the natural system already is unacceptably at or near the boundaries of the proposed disposal units. Predicted increases in rainfall are expected to drive the water tables into the proposed units," the team said in an interoffice memo obtained by the Houston Chronicle through a public information request.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/5586426.html>