

News from Around the Complex

May 1 – May 15, 2009

Special NFAC Article – May 18, 2009

Nuclear Cleanup Awards Questioned: Firms Cited for Errors Get Funding, *The Washington Post*

A private company was being paid \$300 million by the federal government to clean up radioactive waste at two abandoned Cold War plants in Tennessee when an ironworker crashed through a rotted floor. That prompted a major safety review, which ended up forcing work to an abrupt halt, and the project was shut down for months. The delay and a host of other problems caused cost estimates to rise, eventually hitting \$781 million. Now, President Obama's stimulus package is opening a bountiful stream of new funding, and the same contractor, Bechtel Jacobs, is slated to get \$118 million to help complete the job. The Energy Department has begun releasing more than \$6 billion in stimulus money to clean up 18 nuclear sites from New York to California, more than doubling the typical yearly funding for the program. Contractors helped shape the stimulus package and are lined up to get the work, including many that have been cited for serious safety violations and costly mistakes. The contracts -- along with much broader problems in the department's nuclear cleanup program -- have prompted rare, sharply worded warnings from some government officials and lawmakers who say the stimulus funding is ripe for abuse. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/17/AR2009051702254.html>

May 15, 2009

Audit criticizes DOE Hanford contractor oversight, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy needs to improve oversight after a contractor at Hanford was allowed to approve federal funding on behalf of DOE for its own contract, according to an audit by the Department of Energy Office of Inspector General. The audit also said that in some cases the contractor was allowed to prepare statements of work, which established DOE's requirement for work to be performed under its contract. The DOE Hanford Office of River Protection, or ORP, already has made some changes after recognizing that oversight of Project Assistance Corp. was weak before the Office of Inspector General began its investigation.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/915/story/579084.html>

Report available at: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-M-09-02.pdf>

May 13, 2009

White House names Gregory Jaczko US NRC chairman, *Platts Energy Services*

President Barack Obama has named Commissioner Gregory Jaczko as chairman of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the White House announced Wednesday. Senate confirmation is not required because Jaczko is already a member of the commission. Jaczko, a physicist who currently is the only Democrat on the presidentially appointed commission, will replace Dale Klein as chairman. Klein said early this year that he plans to serve out the remainder of his term -- ending in June 2011 -- as a commissioner if replaced as chairman. Before joining the commission in 2005, Jaczko was science adviser to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada. Reid, a fierce opponent of the DOE high-level nuclear waste repository project at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, pushed for Jaczko's appointment to the commission in 2005. Jaczko's second term ends in June 2013.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/7866436.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

May 12, 2009

SRS funds may be reduced in 2011, *Augusta Chronicle*

Funding for Savannah River Site and its critical cleanup and nuclear nonproliferation programs will have only minor changes for fiscal 2010, but a series of reviews under way by the Obama administration could bring broader changes by fiscal 2011. The president's fiscal year 2010 budget request, submitted to Congress last week, would allocate \$1.21 billion to SRS, compared with \$1.227 billion for 2009. Those figures do not include a \$1.9 billion appropriation to SRS from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act. Much of the stimulus money, along with a substantial portion of the regular budget, is devoted to cleanup programs associated with the site's many decades of activity as a producer of nuclear weapons materials.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/05/12/met_523603.shtml

May 11, 2009

Lawmakers to decide on West Valley wastes, *The Buffalo News*

LITTLE VALLEY — Cattaraugus County lawmakers will decide by June 8 whether to pass legislation supporting complete removal of all wastes from the former nuclear fuels reprocessing plant in West Valley. In 2000 and 2004, county lawmakers adopted resolutions supporting the position that the 3,300-acre site should be released from federal control in a condition that will allow unrestricted uses of the land and that all wastes lacking a final repository should be stored in an above-ground retrievable condition until a safe disposal is possible. They supported the conclusions of the West Valley Citizen Task Force, an advisory committee formed by the state that has been meeting since 1997 to develop recommendations for site cleanup.

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/otherwny/story/667867.html?imw=Y>

May 12, 2009

Demolition being considered rather than sealing Hanford nuclear reactor sites, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy is considering tearing down Hanford's K Reactors that stand on the banks of the Columbia River rather than sealing them up for 75 years. If the plan goes forward, it could lead to tearing down eight of the nine plutonium production reactors along the river instead of leaving them "cocooned." Only B Reactor, which is expected to be preserved as a museum, would remain standing. Demolishing the reactors now instead of waiting 75 years to dispose of them could "save a ton of money" in long-term costs, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office. "We have got to get rid of them sometime," he said. In 75 years, the cleanup project would have to be remobilized for the cocooned reactors, new workers hired and trained, and a landfill for radioactive waste in central Hanford reopened for the waste.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/13384.html>

May 8, 2009

FY2010 Energy Budget Shuts Yucca Mountain Nuclear Dump, *Environment News Service*

WASHINGTON, DC - The Obama administration has decided to terminate the program to develop the nation's only permanent geologic repository for highly radioactive nuclear waste, at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Energy Secretary Steven Chu indicated as much last month in a Senate hearing, and the Department of Energy's budget request released Thursday spells out in detail how the administration is going

to approach management of the many thousands of tons of spent nuclear fuel and Defense Department waste from the nation's weapons production.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/may2009/2009-05-08-092.asp>

May 6, 2009

Decommissioning Y-12 Beta-4 facility could save millions, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Workers at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant have removed the nuclear materials from a World War II-era facility known as Beta-4, thus eliminating the building's status as a nuclear production facility and setting the stage for its decommissioning. Because Beta-4 no longer has nuclear materials, including those of weapons potential, it reportedly will not require the same level of surveillance, maintenance and security. Officials said that could save millions of dollars. The National Nuclear Security Administration said the project removed more than 3,000 items weighing more than 234 metric tons. Much of the material was shipped off-site for permanent disposal.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/may/06/decommissioning-could-save-millions/>

May 5, 2009

Officials say goals met for portion of INL cleanup, *Idaho Statesman*

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Federal officials say the cleanup of a former testing area at the Idaho National Laboratory is done - four years ahead of schedule and \$61 million under budget. The U.S. Department of Energy says the original contract cleanup goals for Test Area North, once the headquarters for scientists working to develop a nuclear-powered airplane, have been met. Since 2005, Idaho Cleanup Project crews have demolished hundreds of thousands of square feet of buildings, including reactor containment structures, buried tanks and pipelines and buildings erected between 1954 and 1961.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/IdahoNews/story/758327.html>

May 5, 2009

Utah takes radioactive waste from 3 states with own dumps, *Deseret News*

Despite having a radioactive waste dump of their own, three states have shipped millions of cubic feet of waste across the country this decade to a private facility in Utah that's the only one available to 36 other states, an AP analysis of U.S. Department of Energy records shows. The cross-country shipments are stoking concerns that waste from Connecticut, New Jersey and South Carolina is taking up needed space in Utah, unnecessarily creating potential shipping hazards and undermining congressional intent for states to dispose of their own waste on a regional basis. "It's clear that the low-level waste system in this country is broken when there are states with their own dump sites sending tons of radioactive garbage across the country for disposal in Utah," said Vanessa Pierce, executive director of the nuclear waste watchdog group Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah. "The compact system, which was supposed to protect states from becoming the country's dumping ground, has been totally derailed."

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705301668/Utah-takes-radioactive-waste-from-3-states-with-own-dumps.html>

May 4, 2009

Y-12 facility de-nuked; could save big bucks, *Knoxville News-Sentinel (Blog)*

Workers at Y-12 have completed the removal of special nuclear materials from a World War II-era facility known as Beta-4, thus removing the building's status as a

nuclear production facility and setting the stage for its decommissioning. Because Beta-4 no longer has nuclear materials, including those of weapons potential, it reportedly will not require the same level of surveillance, maintenance and security. Officials said that could save millions of dollars. Beta-4 was built in the 1940s as part of the project to enrich uranium for the first atomic bombs. The original role was discontinued after the war, but the 400,000-square-foot facility was converted to other production activities and, according to Y-12, "played a central role in nuclear component production through the Cold War." The project to remove the nuclear materials and downgrade the facility status began in 2004, according to the National Nuclear Security Administration.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/munger/2009/05/y12_facility_denuked_could_sav.html

May 3, 2009

It's a 'go' for tailings cleanup, *Deseret News*

More than half a century ago, an unemployed geologist stumbled across the country's largest deposit of high-grade uranium in southeastern Utah. The result of that discovery fueled a thriving industry for Moab at the time, but left a legacy of 16 million tons of uranium tailings that currently threaten the Colorado River. Today is a celebratory landmark in the cleanup process at the former Atlas mill site, where 22 rail cars hauling 88 containers of the waste will head 30 miles north to Crescent Junction to a disposal site. "It's huge," said Donald Metzler, project manager with the Department of Energy. "There's been a lot of interest, a lot of pressure, to get this done."

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,705301268,00.html>

May 2, 2009

Report faults Savannah River Site contractors for substandard construction materials, *The Island Packet (South Carolina)*

WASHINGTON -- Contractors at one of the nation's major nuclear weapons complexes repeatedly used substandard construction materials and components that could've caused a major radioactive spill, a recently completed internal government probe has found. One of the materials used at the Savannah River Site on the South Carolina-Georgia border failed to meet federal safety standards and "could have resulted in a spill of up to 15,000 gallons of high-level radioactive waste," the Energy Department's inspector general found. The inspector general's five-month investigation also found that contractors bought 9,500 tons of substandard steel reinforcing bars for the Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C.

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/story/833235.html>

Report Available at: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0814.pdf>