

## News from Around the Complex

September 1 – September 15, 2009

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September 15, 2009

### **A nuclear waste solution, *Los Angeles Times***

[*Opinion*] The Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository project is now comatose, if not dead. And that puts us back at square one on a crucial question: What are we going to do with all the radioactive waste being discharged by U.S. nuclear power reactors? Many conservatives on Capitol Hill favor the French "solution": spent-fuel reprocessing. But reprocessing isn't a solution at all: It's a very expensive and dangerous detour. Reprocessing takes used or "spent" nuclear fuel and dissolves it to separate the uranium and plutonium from the highly radioactive fission products. The plutonium and uranium are then recycled to make new reactor fuel, thereby reducing the amount of fresh uranium required by about 20%. But based on French and Japanese experience, the cost of producing this recycled fuel is several times that of producing fresh uranium reactor fuel.\*\*\* The U.S. made the mistake with Yucca Mountain of trying to force a repository on an unwilling state. One alternative would be to follow the path of Finland and Sweden, which have placed their underground repositories in communities that already host nuclear power plants. They have found that once people in a community have accepted a nuclear facility, they view the addition of an underground repository as a relatively minor issue.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-vonhippel15-2009sep15,0,2705493.story>

September 14, 2009

### **State of Nevada files Five New Contentions, *State of Nevada Press Release***

Nevada has filed five new contentions in the Yucca Mountain Licensing Proceeding, since its original Petition to Intervene (along with 229 contentions) was filed on December 19, 2008. Of those original 229 contentions, 222 were admitted in the proceeding by the NRC. No ruling on the admissibility of the five new contentions has yet been made. They are designated NEV-SAFETY-202 through NEV-SAFETY-206. Of the five new contentions, two are based upon DOE's February 19, 2009 LA Update No. 1 (its only LA Update); two are based on the March 13, 2009 publication by the NRC of its new Final Rule 10 C.F.R. 63, regarding its Yucca Mountain licensing standards; and the final one is based on newly released information by DOE, corrosion analysis data made available July 31, 2009.

<http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2009/pdf/nv090914nrc.pdf>

September 11, 2009

### **Germany investigates nuclear waste storage report, *The Associated Press***

BERLIN — Germany will investigate a 1983 report on a nuclear waste storage facility after allegations that the report was manipulated by officials at the time, the government said Friday. The Gorleben facility has long been a focus of anti-nuclear activity, with protesters saying the temporary disposal site near a disused salt mine in northwest Germany is not safe. They also object to plans for moving the waste underground into the mine once it can be converted for the purpose. This week, German media said an official in former Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government had raised concerns about an evaluation that led to the establishment of Gorleben. According to the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* daily, the Research Ministry official wrote a

letter asking that certain passages that pointed at potential dangers at the site be removed from the evaluation.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jbmaddISIE1jPKznkdXPUPYlxxrAD9AL7U3G4>

See Previous NFAC Article (August 26, 2009):

[http://www.upi.com/Energy\\_Resources/2009/08/26/German-nuke-waste-storage-site-dead/UPI-25871251311089/](http://www.upi.com/Energy_Resources/2009/08/26/German-nuke-waste-storage-site-dead/UPI-25871251311089/)

September 11, 2009

**Hanford K East Basin finally gone for good, *Tri-City Herald***

The infamous K East Basin is history after Hanford workers finished excavating it Wednesday night. The leak-prone basin was considered one of Hanford's top environmental risks when it was filled with 1,100 tons of fuel that had been irradiated to produce plutonium. The basin is 400 yards from the Columbia River. It also has been a challenge for the Department of Energy and its contractors as through the years of cleanup, it has yielded surprise after surprise. The latest surprise was more contamination than expected as workers excavated near its bottom, slowing work while more shielding was placed to protect workers. But DOE and the new contractor on the project, CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., still met the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement deadline to have the basin gone by the end of this month with weeks to spare.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/14027.html>

September 10, 2009

**Roads get the publicity, but the Idaho National Laboratory gets the cash: Stimulus money is speeding the cleanup of wastes generated by nuclear research at the E. Idaho lab, *Idaho Statesman***

WASHINGTON - As federal stimulus money works its way into the state's economy, Idaho's debate over how to spend its \$182 million share for transportation has most of the headlines. Yet the biggest chunk of the money being spent in Idaho right now under the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is going to another project: the nuclear cleanup at the Idaho National Laboratory. The \$468 million INL stimulus is part of \$6 billion in stimulus money going to 12 states as part of the Department of Energy's nuclear cleanup program. Much of the cleanup work at INL has been planned for some time, but the stimulus money is accelerating spending. The spending on the INL cleanup is such a big part of the Recovery Act money coming to Idaho that Idaho ranks fifth in per capita stimulus spending by state, according to an analysis by ProPublica, an independent nonprofit investigative journalism Web site.

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/273/story/894425.html>

September 10, 2009

**DOE considers building another Hanford landfill, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Energy is taking a look at building a new landfill in central Hanford to hold uncontaminated waste that's now being trucked 110 miles for disposal off-site. "We're looking for greener ways to go," said Jim Butner, project manager for DOE contractor CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co. The landfill could save taxpayer money and have environmental benefits, said Kevin Leary, a DOE environmental engineer. The proposal is in early stages of development and a cost study has yet to be done. But Leary estimates that building a new landfill at Hanford could save \$2 million over the life of the project just in the cost of fuel for transporting waste to the Roosevelt Regional Landfill.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/710545.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/710545.html)

September 8, 2009

**Big question could stall K-25 demolition work, Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog**

One of the most challenging demolition projects in history may get even more difficult. It appears the presence of technetium-99, a devilish radioactive element, may be more widespread than previously thought in processing equipment at the K-25 uranium-enrichment plant. If so, that could complicate plans for taking down the east wing of the massive, U-shaped building and potentially delay the project's schedule and jack up the cost. Weapons Complex Monitor, a Washington-based newsletter, raised the concerns in a story last week. The Department of Energy and environmental regulators have reportedly been studying the issue since March.  
[http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/09/big\\_question\\_could\\_stall\\_k-25.html](http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/09/big_question_could_stall_k-25.html)

September 7, 2009

**Hanford gets deadlines to fix underground contamination, Seattle Post-Intelligencer**

The Hanford nuclear reservation now has deadlines of three to nine years to fix its plumes of underground radioactive and chemical contamination next to the Columbia River. The last of the riverside plumes of radioactive liquids should be addressed by 2018, according to an August agreement that the U.S. Department of Energy signed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Washington's Department of Ecology. DOE's Hanford Manager David Brockman briefed the Hanford Advisory Board on the agreement Thursday in Seattle. The 32-member board represents the Hanford political spectrum, including environmentalists, workers, Tri-Cities interests, health groups and others. This is the first time that cleanup deadlines have been nailed down for the subterranean riverside contamination.

[http://www.seattlepi.com/local/409854\\_hanford08.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/409854_hanford08.html)

September 6, 2009

**DOE studying how contaminants enter Columbia River, Tri-City Herald**

New technology is providing information on how contaminated ground water from the Hanford nuclear reservation may be entering the Columbia River. A study for the Department of Energy of where ground water seeps into the river and what contaminants it contains won't be completed until the end of the year. But already there is evidence showing ground water enters the Columbia River in upwellings away from its shores, said Larry Hulstrom, Washington Closure Hanford project lead for the Columbia River investigation. It's generally been assumed that ground water enters the river in seeps and springs within the first 6 feet of its banks. But some of the ground water may become trapped below a hard layer in the ground and only seeps into deep areas of the river, rather than at its shores.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/706095.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/706095.html)

September 4, 2009

**Audit Report: Department of Energy's Efforts to Meet Accountability and Performance Reporting Objectives of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Office of the Inspector General, DOE**

[Background from DOE-IG Memorandum to the Secretary] Because of the significance of funds provided and their importance to strengthening the Nation's economy, we initiated this review to determine whether the Department had taken the steps necessary to ensure that Recovery Act funds can be appropriately tracked and are transparent to the public, and whether the benefits of the expenditures can be properly measured and reported clearly, accurately, and in a timely manner.\*\*\*Although not yet fully mature, we found that the Department's efforts to

develop, refine, and apply the control structure needed to ensure accurate, timely, and reliable reporting to be both proactive and positive. We did, however, identify certain issues relating to Recovery Act performance management, accounting and reporting accuracy, and timeliness that should be addressed and resolved.

<http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-RA-09-04.pdf>

See Related Special Report from DOE-IG: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act at the Department of Energy (March 2009)

<http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/OAS-RA-09-01-New508-G.pdf>

September 4, 2009

**Foreign waste deal still on table: Settlement talks aimed at getting state to drop its objections are in progress, EnergySolutions says, *Deseret News***

EnergySolutions Inc. said Friday it is in settlement talks with Utah aimed at getting the state to drop its objections to importing foreign nuclear waste for disposal in the state. The company wants to import as much as 20,000 tons of low-level radioactive waste from Italy through the ports of Charleston, S.C., or New Orleans. After processing in Tennessee, about 1,600 tons would be disposed of in the desert about 70 miles west of Salt Lake City. If approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, it would be the largest amount of radioactive waste ever imported into the country.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705327936/Foreign-waste-deal-still-on-table.html>

September 3, 2009

**White House: D'Agostino To Remain as NNSA Administrator, *DOE Press Release***

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, President Barack Obama announced that Thomas Paul D'Agostino, Under Secretary for Nuclear Security of the Department of Energy and Administrator for Nuclear Security of the National Nuclear Security Administration, will continue serving in his current role. The following is a quote from the President included in today's White House press release (the full release is included below): "The dedication and talent of these individuals will be tremendously valuable to my administration as we work to tackle our challenges at home and abroad, and I look forward to working with them in the coming months and years."

<http://www.energy.gov/news2009/7856.htm>

September 2, 2009

**Coalition urges complete West Valley cleanup, *Buffalo News***

A coalition urged the public Tuesday to contact state and federal officials in the next week to demand full cleanup of the state's largest nuclear waste site at West Valley. Surrounded by about 20 people holding mops, buckets and brooms, speakers assembled outside the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority offices in the Larkin at Exchange Building in Buffalo. They called on the agency and the federal Department of Energy to support the complete cleanup of the West Valley nuclear waste site to avoid future radioactive contamination of Lake Erie drinking water.

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/otherwny/story/782237.html?imw=Y>

## News from Around the Complex

September 16 – September 30, 2009

Available on-line at [www.fftfcleanup.org](http://www.fftfcleanup.org)

September 30, 2009

### **Uncertainties and Questions about Costs and Risks Persist with DOE's Tank Waste Cleanup Strategy at Hanford, GAO Report**

[Excerpt from Report Highlights] DOE's tank waste cleanup strategy consists of five key phases—waste characterization, retrieval, pretreatment, treatment, and permanent disposal—but critical uncertainties call into question whether the strategy can succeed as planned. Technical uncertainties include whether DOE can retrieve waste from tanks at the rate needed to support continuous operation of the waste treatment complex now under construction and whether key treatment technologies will work. Legal uncertainties include whether DOE can treat and dispose of some tank waste as other than high-level (highly radioactive) waste and how much residual waste can be left in the tanks when they are eventually closed. Such uncertainties could lead to significant cost increases and further delays in completing Hanford's tank waste cleanup activities.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09913.pdf>

September 28, 2009

### **1,000 jobs lost at uranium enrichment plant, Associated Press**

BETHESDA, Md. — USEC Inc. said Monday about 120 employees and more than 850 workers for suppliers have lost their jobs since the Energy Department delayed a final review of the company's application for a \$2 billion loan guarantee to finance a uranium-enrichment plant in southern Ohio. USEC suspended work on the project in August after the government's decision over its plans for the American Centrifuge plant in Piketon. Job losses have occurred in eight states with Ohio and Tennessee having the largest losses. USEC said it is continuing with demonstration activities for the project and wants to be in a position to ramp back up should it be approved for the loan guarantees in 2010. The company said it hopes to update its application for the loan guarantee by early next year.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iM98V9ibCdLuZFa6MG9pYMdOFn1wD9B0IVJ01>

September 28, 2009

### **HANFORD: Digging starts at K East Basin, Tri-City Herald**

Richland Work began Sunday to dig up contaminated soil beneath the recently removed K East Basin at Hanford. The work meets a legally binding deadline under the Tri-Party Agreement to start excavation within 30 days of the removal of the

basin. "We're addressing one of the greatest hazards to the Columbia River from the legacy of producing plutonium at Hanford," said Dave Brockman, manager of the Department of Energy's Hanford Richland Operations Office. The basin originally held fuel irradiated at the K East Reactor to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/945/story/734321.html>

See Previous NFAC Article (September 11, 2009):

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/14027.html>

September 26, 2009

**Nuclear sites fear being the alternative to Yucca, *Richmond Times-Dispatch***

WASHINGTON -- It is among the nastiest substances on earth: more than 14,000 tons of highly radioactive waste left over from the building of the nation's nuclear-weapons arsenal. As the Obama administration and Senate leaders move to scuttle a proposed repository for the waste in Nevada, the Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington state, along with federal facilities in Idaho and South Carolina, could become the de facto dump sites for years to come. After spending \$10 billion to \$12 billion over the past 25 years studying a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, President Barack Obama is fulfilling a campaign promise to kill it as a site for the repository. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada also stands to benefit, as he faces re-election next year and Nevada residents adamantly oppose the project. But local leaders and lawmakers from the sites where the waste is now stored are increasingly concerned that the Energy Department will leave the material in place, even though that might violate legally binding cleanup agreements.

[http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/lifestyles/health\\_med\\_fit/article/I-NUKE0901\\_20090924-231810/295414/](http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/lifestyles/health_med_fit/article/I-NUKE0901_20090924-231810/295414/)

September 27, 2009

**Waste mixing being tested for Hanford vit plant, *Tri-City Herald***

Orange liquid swirled and pulsed in a clear acrylic tank just outside the Hanford nuclear reservation. The iron oxide that gave the tank's contents its bright color was one of several materials in the tank being used to simulate the heavy particles in radioactive waste that tanks at the Hanford vitrification plant will need to keep mixed. Once the vitrification plant begins operating to turn some of Hanford's worst radioactive waste into a solid glass form, some tanks will be in "black cells" that will be so radioactive after operations begin that humans cannot enter again. That means the mixing system that's been developed with no moving parts and is being tested now must work nearly perfectly for 40 years without the help of human hands.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/732538.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/732538.html)

September 25, 2009

### **A Nuclear Advisory Panel Now Focusing On Waste Recycling, *The Tech (MIT)***

With a federal plan to handle nuclear waste in deadlocked disarray, an advisory panel that has spent 20 years studying a proposed repository at Yucca Mountain turned Wednesday to discussing ways of reusing the fuel instead. But the meeting of the panel, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board, made evident that such reuse was uncertain, along with the future of Yucca Mountain, in Nevada, about 100 miles from Las Vegas. The board heard presentations from three major nuclear companies on strategies for sorting out the components of nuclear waste: burying some, recovering others for use as fuel and putting some in reactors to be transformed into materials that are easier to handle.

<http://tech.mit.edu/V129/N39/waste.html>

September 24, 2009

### **Hanford landfill still growing, *Tri-City Herald***

Work has started to make Hanford's massive landfill for low-level radioactive waste even larger. Improvements also are being made to help the landfill, the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, or ERDF, keep up with the accelerated pace of environmental cleanup at the nuclear reservation. Cleanup work at Hanford is increasing with the infusion of \$1.96 billion in federal economic stimulus money. With more cleanup work comes the need for more waste disposal capacity, so the stimulus funding includes about \$100 million for work at ERDF. "The pace of cleanup at Hanford is totally linked to the capabilities of ERDF," said Dave Einan, an environmental engineer for the Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates the Department of Energy project.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/14093.html>

September 23, 2009

### **EnergySolutions: State rejects depleted uranium shipment moratorium, *The Salt Lake Tribune***

State officials Tuesday rejected a plea to place a moratorium on any more depleted-uranium shipments to an EnergySolutions site in Tooele County, possibly clearing the way for shipments next month of the radioactive waste. But the state still could require the company to remove the waste in the future. In an 8-3 vote, the Utah Radiation Control Board rebuffed a request from the anti-nuclear-waste group HEAL Utah to halt such shipments until the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission finishes a three-year examination of whether depleted uranium should be reclassified on the nation's radiation danger scale. With the support of Department of Environmental Quality Executive Director Amanda Smith, the board decided it was better to amend EnergySolutions' license than to impose the moratorium, which NRC officials warned could lead to unwanted sanctions against the state.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_13398187](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_13398187)

See Previous NFAC Article (September 4, 2009):

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705327936/Foreign-waste-deal-still-on-table.html>

September 22, 2009

**Ohio firm gets \$10M stimulus contract in OR, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - The Department of Energy has awarded a \$10.1 million project to a small business in Ohio for soil excavation and capping activities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, a federal spokesman said Monday. The work is part of the environmental efforts being funded by the Recovery Act in Oak Ridge. According to DOE spokesman John Shewairy, the work was awarded to LATA-Sharp Remediation Services, a small business based in Westerville, Ohio. The award was made under a nationwide Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contract already in place, and Shewairy said that allowed DOE to complete the work more quickly among pre-qualified companies. Shewairy said the work at ORNL will involve the removal of some soils contaminated with chemicals and radioactive materials. The contractor also will install a "multilayer" cap over two waste storage areas to keep rainwater out and reduce the chance of pollution migrating into the groundwater system, he said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/sep/22/ohio-firm-gets-10m-stimulus-contract-in-or/>

September 20, 2009

**Constellation eyes \$50M radioactive storage facility, *The Palladium-Times (New York)***

Members of Constellation Energy, owner of Nine Mile Nuclear Power Plant's units 1 and 2 in Scriba, are in the planning stages of developing dry cask storage facilities to store radioactive waste on-site. According to a Constellation spokesperson, it will cost an estimated \$50 million to build the structures that will house the radioactive material, which is used as fuel in the power plant reactors. Currently, units 1 and 2 utilize a circulating water spent fuel pool. However, according to Neil Sheehan, public affairs officer of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), space will eventually run out in these structures. "At some point, those pools fill up. They don't have infinite capacity," Sheehan said. "The plant needs to come up with an alternative (form) of storing that, and the only alternative at the moment is dry cask storage." Maureen Brown, director of generation communication for Constellation, said it was the federal government's responsibility to establish a national repository for used nuclear fuel by 1998.

<http://www.palltimes.com/articles/2009/09/20/news/doc4ab685dd3f73a990758723.txt>

September 18, 2009

**WIPP completes first shipment from VNC, *Carlsbad Current-Argus***

CARLSBAD — The U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office, working with GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy at the Vallecitos Nuclear Center near Sunol, Calif.,

completed the first shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste from VNC to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in the southeastern corner of New Mexico. The shipment safely arrived at WIPP early Friday morning. The shipping campaign is expected to be completed in mid-November. The DOE estimates that about 30-40 RH shipments will be sent from VNC to WIPP. The packaging of the waste is ongoing and will continue through October. The characterization, packaging and removal processes of waste at VNC were funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. CBFO and WIPP have received \$172 million in ARRA funds to support cleanup activities across the DOE complex.

[http://www.currentargus.com/ci\\_13371098?source=most\\_viewed](http://www.currentargus.com/ci_13371098?source=most_viewed)

September 16, 2009

### **US Energy Dept: Nuclear Waste Panel Announcement Coming Soon, NASDAQ**

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Energy will soon make an announcement on a blue-ribbon panel to study how to deal with the country's growing civilian nuclear waste, a spokeswoman said Wednesday. As part of a long-running rift over how to deal with the nation's nuclear power waste, the Obama administration announced plans this year to cancel the Yucca Mountain waste repository site 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Although Energy Secretary Steven Chu said in April he would appoint a panel to determine the country's future nuclear waste policy, there's been no news since of who would be named and when the panel would be convened. DOE spokeswoman Stephanie Mueller told Dow Jones on Wednesday, "We are planning to make an announcement soon," but declined to elaborate.

<http://www.nasdaq.com/asp/stock-market-news-story.aspx?storyid=200909161911dowjonesdjonline000702&title=us-energy-dept-nuclear-waste-panel-announcement-coming-soon>