

News from Around the Complex

November 1 – November 30, 2009

Available on-line at www.fftfcleanup.org

November 30, 2009

Will there be compensation for bringing foreign nuclear waste to Oak Ridge? *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

At one time, there was a movement seeking state legislation that would impose a tax on foreign nuclear waste coming to Oak Ridge, a response to the EnergySolutions proposal to import thousands of tons of low-level radioactive waste from Italy. That apparently is no longer the case, but Oak Ridge Mayor Tom Beehan recently reiterated that he had had preliminary discussions with EnergySolutions about the possibility of some type of in-lieu-of-tax payments if the proposal becomes reality.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/11/will_there_be_compensation_for.html

November 29, 2009

Lawmakers target radioactive waste in TN landfills, *The Tennessean*

Lawmakers are questioning a state program that allows low-level radioactive waste to go to regular landfills in Tennessee. A state legislative study committee held a hearing on the issue last week, and Rep. Brenda Gilmore of Nashville said she plans to move forward with a bill to curb the practice. The bill was halted in its tracks last year, with a strong lobbying effort from the industry, she said. "We should not accept additional waste," Gilmore said. "We know there's waste being generated in our hospitals. We can't pretend it's going to evaporate, but I wouldn't want to see us accept it from any other state or another country." The Tennessee Environmental Council board chairman and at least one radioactive waste hauler say it's a risky business, while state regulators insist the practice of accepting both regular refuse and slightly radioactive is safe and manageable. Companies have already brought the wastes from states that include California, Ohio and Pennsylvania, bypassing much closer sanitary landfills, which in some cases won't accept those materials. In some states, permission to dump low-level radioactive materials is done on a case-by-case basis with approval needed for each load.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20091129/NEWS02/911290353/-1/NEWS01/Lawmakers+target+radioactive+waste+in+TN+landfills>

November 29, 2009

Los Alamos laboratory demolishing Cold War-era buildings, *Durango Herald*

ALBUQUERQUE - Los Alamos National Laboratory is tearing down a legacy of the Cold War. Lab officials have invited dignitaries to a Tuesday ceremony to watch an excavator begin breaking down the walls of one of the largest buildings at Technical Area 21, a 22,000-square-foot structure used as an administration building for decades. The demolition is part of a program to dismantle a quarter-mile complex that was the second generation of buildings at the lab, which grew out of the secret Manhattan Project that developed the world's first atomic bomb during World War II. Most of TA-21's buildings were used into the 1980s, although a few operated past that. The area lies south of the Los Alamos community's airport, outside what is now the laboratory's main research complex. The site is surrounded by security fences, but the guard towers that once marked it have long since been torn down. A lab historian, Ellen McGehee, was with the ecology group - lab biologists, archaeologists and cultural resources managers - that was the administration building's last tenant.

http://durangoherald.com/sections/News/2009/11/29/Los_Alamos_laboratory_demolishing_Cold_Warera_buildings/

November 27, 2009

Prepping for hot site cleanup at ORNL, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

Bids are due in mid-December for field work on Tank W1-A/Corehole 8. That's a problem-plagued hot site in ORNL's historic central campus, where long-standing leaks of radioactive waste from pipes, etc., contaminated the soil and ultimately migrated via the local groundwater. It's one of the Oak Ridge environmental projects that's being carried out with Recovery Act funding, with Bechtel Jacobs taking the lead and subcontracting various tasks. This project will involve excavation of radioactive soils that were contaminated years ago by operations at the lab facilities. The cleanup was attempted a few years ago, but was put off because soil was too hot to do safely and needed more study to prevent exposures to workers.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/11/prepping_for_hot_site_cleanup.html

November 26, 2009

NRC demands changes to Savannah MOX plant construction, *Nuclear Engineering International*

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a Confirmatory Order to the mixed oxide facility under construction at the Department of Energy's Savannah River site near Aiken, S.C. as part of a settlement agreement in a case involving a contract senior engineer allowing a junior engineer to sign his signature to documents in violation of facility construction procedures and NRC requirements. The order requires Shaw AREVA MOX Services, the company building the facility, to adhere to changes in its NRC construction authorization based on an agreement reached during alternative dispute resolution sessions with the agency in October.

<http://www.neimagazine.com/story.asp?sectionCode=132&storyCode=2054831>

November 24, 2009

Looking for ORNL's nuke waste across the river, *Knoxville News-Sentinel Blog*

The Department of Energy and its environmental manager, Bechtel Jacobs, have launched a Recovery Act-funded project to install monitoring wells across the Clinch River from ORNL's nuclear burial grounds. The wells will be used to check the groundwater and determine if any of the lab's buried pollutants have migrated off-site, perhaps via deep-lying cracks or channels in rock formations underneath the river. Earlier this year, DOE began supplying potable water for residents on Jones Road near the Clinch and agreed to pay for water lines to their properties, discontinuing the use of drinking wells there. DOE and state officials have said they believe it is unlikely that the contamination has spread from one side of the Clinch to the other, but acknowledged the possibility.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/11/have_ornl_radionuclides_cross.html

November 21, 2009

Closing of Incinerator Delayed, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The last waste to be burned at the federal government's 20-year-old toxic waste incinerator is apparently proving to be some of the most difficult. The Department of Energy and its environmental manager have again delayed the permanent closure of the Oak Ridge incinerator, citing the need for more time to process mercury-laden waste. "The delay was due to high mercury concentrations in the liquid waste requiring slower feed rates," Bechtel spokesman Dennis Hill said in a response to questions. DOE

has discussed shutting down its Oak Ridge incinerator for several years, but extended its lifetime a couple of times to treat additional waste from nuclear cleanup sites around the country. Earlier this year, however, it stopped accepting waste shipments and began burning up the remaining inventory, with a plan to shut it down permanently at the end of September. That was delayed until mid-November because of difficulties in treating the hazardous waste, leading to the current situation. The new plan is to shut it down Nov. 30.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/nov/21/closing-of-incinerator-delayed/>

November 20, 2009

Hanford employment projected to peak in 2010, *Tri-City Herald*

HANFORD -- The Department of Energy is predicting that employment at the Hanford nuclear reservation will peak in fiscal 2010 at about 10,800 employees and then begin a decline toward 2,100 workers by 2050, when most environmental cleanup work is completed. The projections were requested by the Tri-City Development Council to help entities such as schools, utilities and counties with long-term planning, said Gary Petersen, TRIDEC vice president of Hanford programs. For most communities in the nation, the closure of a plant or other complex such as a military base that's a major employer happens suddenly and the jobs disappear quickly, Petersen said. The Tri-Cities has the advantage of being able to look ahead and prepare for the loss of Hanford employment, he said.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/800324.html

November 20, 2009

Panel OKs ban on imported nuclear waste intended for TN processing, *The Tennessean*

WASHINGTON — Legislation co-authored by Rep. Bart Gordon to ban importation of low-level nuclear waste was approved by a House committee Thursday. Gordon introduced the bill after EnergySolutions applied to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to import 20,000 tons of radioactive waste from Italian nuclear facilities for processing at a company facility in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and storage at a company site in Utah. Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved the bill 34-12 on a mostly party-line vote, with Democrats voting yes and Republicans voting no. Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Brentwood, the only other Tennessee member of the committee, voted against the bill. Gordon, D-Murfreesboro, says that the ban is needed because the Clive, Utah, storage facility is the only one serving 37 states, and that putting foreign nuclear waste there could cause a storage problem.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20091120/NEWS02/911200372/1009/NEWS02>

November 19, 2009

Boeing blocks lab cleanup: Rocketdyne lab remediation left in limbo, *Ventura County Reporter*

Boeing's filing of a federal complaint on Friday the 13th against the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control over cleaning up the monstrously polluted Santa Susana Field Lab was no tardy Halloween trick. The move attempts to gut state Senate Bill 990, which was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in October 2007, to ensure that the 2,850-acre site is cleaned up to the highest standards. Invalidating SB 990 would save Boeing hundreds of millions of dollars. The state's stringent cleanup levels would be relaxed, saving Boeing on the amount of soil and groundwater contamination that would have to be removed from the site and sent to a dump. If Boeing is successful, federal EPA "Superfund" standards would apply. That would protect the defense contractor giant from most of the remediation costs, due to a Supreme Court ruling earlier this year that restricts Superfund liabilities for some corporations. But to hear Boeing tell it, this blocking action is about saving critters, among other things. In a unique twist of logic, the lawsuit contends that the extensive SSFL remediation would actually hurt the environment.

http://www.vcreporter.com/cms/story/detail/boeing_blocks_lab_cleanup/7416/

See Previous NFAC Article (November 13, 2009):

http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_13786082

November 17, 2009

DOE's Non-Performance on Nuclear Fuel Storage Costs Billions, *Reuters*

As the U.S. electric industry is contemplating building new nuclear power plants for the first time in decades, the industry continues to be faced with uncertainty regarding the ultimate long-term disposal solution for the nation's spent nuclear fuel (SNF). Since 1982, when Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, nuclear power plant owners and operators have been funding the development and construction of a national SNF storage facility that may never materialize-that funding amounting to \$30 billion to date. Under the terms of the 1982 legislation, nuclear utilities entered into mandatory contracts with the Department of Energy (DOE) under which the utilities pay the federal government one mill (one tenth of a cent) for every kilowatt hour of nuclear-generated electricity sold to their customers. In return, the government assumed responsibility for the development, construction, and maintenance of a facility that would be ready to accept the nation's SNF beginning no later than January 31, 1998.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/mnEnergy/idUS248398660520091117>

November 16, 2009

Notice of Availability of the U.S. Department of Energy Interim Guidance on Packaging, Transportation, Receipt, Management, and Long-Term Storage of Elemental Mercury, *Federal Register Notice*

As required by the Act, DOE has prepared the U.S. Department of Energy Interim Guidance on Packaging, Transportation, Receipt, Management, and Long Term Storage of Elemental Mercury (the Interim Guidance) in consultation with EPA and state agencies. The Interim Guidance provides a framework for the standards and procedures associated with the long-term management of elemental mercury and the operation of a DOE designated elemental mercury storage facility with a focus on the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) compliance of such a facility. The Interim Guidance may be supplemented and, as appropriate, superseded by the host State's RCRA permitting of the future elemental mercury storage facility.

<http://frwebgate4.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=685573401721+1+2+0&WAIAction=retrieve>

November 14, 2009

S.C. waste coming to Oak Ridge: Savannah River nuke facility sends some of stock for treatment, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River nuclear facility in South Carolina is using a wealth of Recovery Act funding to accelerate cleanup activities and reduce its Cold War stockpile of radioactive waste. Some of that waste, containing radioactive tritium and other contaminants, is coming to Oak Ridge for treatment and packaging before being shipped west to Nevada or Utah for disposal. Two local facilities owned by Perma-Fix Environmental Services Inc. - Diversified Scientific Services Inc. near Kingston and Materials & Energy Corp. in Oak Ridge - have been hired to treat the so-called mixed waste, which contains both radioactive elements and hazardous chemicals. "Not only is it radioactive for its tritium content, it is hazardous for mercury, which can make treatment of this waste challenging," Jacob Nims, project engineer with the government's contractor, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, said in a statement released to the news media.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/nov/14/sc-waste-coming-to-oak-ridge/>

November 13, 2009

Goodbye, equity; hello, hazardous waste?, Knoxville News Sentinel Blog

[Opinion] The riches of the Recovery Act are spurring accelerated cleanups at Dept. of Energy sites around the country, including Oak Ridge. But some folks aren't too thrilled with one of the off-shoots of this funding bonanza -- more toxic waste coming to Oak Ridge for treatment. The example of the moment is the tritium- and mercury-contaminated waste that's coming from DOE's Savannah River nuclear facility in South Carolina to DSSI and M&EC -- two local waste-treatment facilities owned by Perma-Fix Environmental. Susan Gawarecki, executive director of the Local Oversight Committee, has multiple concerns, and she's trying to raise the public profile of these waste shipments. One of her concerns is that these commercial waste-treatment facilities get their licenses and permits individually, without anybody really studying the cumulative impacts of their emissions, etc. She also believes the image of Oak Ridge as a haven for hazardous waste doesn't help economic development, and she said Oak Ridge isn't getting any leverage or "equity" from these DOE shipments -- which it did in years past when the DOE wastes were coming to the agency's Oak Ridge TSCA incinerator (no longer accepting waste and soon to be shut down permanently).

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/11/goodbye_equity_hello_hazardous.html

November 13, 2009

Boeing seeks easier lab cleanup: Suit aims to topple law, set aside higher standard, Daily News (Los Angeles)

CHATSWORTH — The majority owner of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory filed suit Friday to scuttle a state law requiring the highest cleanup standards at one of the nation's most polluted sites. The Boeing Co. asked a federal court to overturn a 2007 state law regulating cleanup of the rocket engine and nuclear testing facility. The company contends only the federal government, not the state of California, has the authority to oversee cleanup at nuclear energy sites. Overturning Senate Bill 990 would likely lead to federal standards applying to the multibillion-dollar cleanup at the former Rocketdyne lab in the hills between Chatsworth and Simi Valley, rather than the stricter state standards. The Boeing lawsuit was filed Friday in the U.S. District Court in Sacramento against Maziar Movassaghi, acting director of the state Department of Toxic Substances Control, the agency overseeing the cleanup.

http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_13786082

Text of Boeing's Lawsuit against the State:

http://extras.mnginteractive.com/live/media/site200/2009/1113/20091113_105933_boeing_complaint.pdf

November 13, 2009

Miles to go on Livermore nuclear lab cleanup: Quarrels remain as the Northern California community and the federal government search for an affordable and environmental solution, Los Angeles Times

The Energy Department is spending \$328 million to clean up two separate areas of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory -- the agency's largest nuclear-weapons cleanup project in California. The cleanup is relatively minor compared with others in the U.S., but it still has led to conflicts between the local community and the federal government as both search for a solution that is affordable and environmentally acceptable. Livermore is one of two U.S. labs that designed nuclear weapons. It continues to conduct research into plutonium behavior, high-powered lasers, computer-simulated nuclear reactions and other areas. Under the cloak of secrecy, the lab conducted experiments with plutonium and uranium,

and fabricated prototype weapons parts. At its large test range near Tracy, in Northern California, it blew up atomic triggers that used depleted uranium.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-radiation-livermore13-2009nov13,0,4349620.story>

November 13, 2009

Nuclear scars: Tainted water runs beneath Nevada desert: The state faces a water crisis and population boom, but radioactive waste from the Nevada Test Site has polluted aquifers, *Los Angeles Times*

Reporting from Yucca Flat, Nev. A sea of ancient water tainted by the Cold War is creeping deep under the volcanic peaks, dry lake beds and pinyon pine forests covering a vast tract of Nevada. Over 41 years, the federal government detonated 921 nuclear warheads underground at the Nevada Test Site, 75 miles northeast of Las Vegas. Each explosion deposited a toxic load of radioactivity into the ground and, in some cases, directly into aquifers. When testing ended in 1992, the Energy Department estimated that more than 300 million curies of radiation had been left behind, making the site one of the most radioactively contaminated places in the nation. During the era of weapons testing, Nevada embraced its role almost like a patriotic duty. There seemed to be no better use for an empty desert. But today, as Nevada faces a water crisis and a population boom, state officials are taking a new measure of the damage.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-radiation-nevada13-2009nov13,0,3038881.story>

November 12, 2009

Secretary Chu Announces Determination of No Adverse Material Impact for Uranium Transfer to Fund Portsmouth Cleanup, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary Chu announced today that the Department of Energy has issued a final determination and market impact study for the proposed uranium transfer to fund accelerated cleanup activities at the Portsmouth Site in Piketon, Ohio, which will create between 800 to 1,000 new jobs for the community. The market review and determination confirms that the proposed transfer of uranium will not have an adverse material impact on the domestic uranium industries. Under the determination, DOE's Office of Environmental Management will be able to transfer as much as 300 metric tons of uranium per quarter in calendar years 2009 and 2010 for cleanup at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant, so long as the total transfer during that period does not exceed 1,125 metric tons of uranium.

<http://www.energy.gov/news2009/8286.htm>

November 11, 2009

Radiation board requires safety report on depleted uranium, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

EnergySolutions won't be able to bring more depleted uranium to Utah until the company proves the waste can be safely disposed in Tooele County for the long run. That's what the Utah Radiation Control Board decided Tuesday by sticking to principles it adopted last month, even after the company threatened legal action. The limit on DU, as depleted uranium is often called, does not go into effect for several months, and that leaves open a window for EnergySolutions to bring up to 15,000 drums of it from a government cleanup in South Carolina. But board members said their action Tuesday actually gets the safeguard in place sooner than originally expected. EnergySolutions sent its attorney to the board meeting Tuesday to warn of potential legal consequences if the board did not backtrack on actions taken at its October meeting.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_13759465

November 11, 2009

DOE ponders options, cost of K-25 cleanup, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

Nobody is saying how much money it's going to cost or when exactly it's going to get finished, but Bechtel Jacobs Co. has presented the Department of Energy with a bunch of options - 22, all told - for completing the demolition of the massive K-25 building in Oak Ridge. "Each one has a different price tag, or each one takes a longer or shorter time," Joe Nemec, president of Bechtel Jacobs, DOE's cleanup manager, said of the various plans. The complicating issue is the presence of radioactive technetium-99, which was introduced into the uranium-enrichment processes decades ago and requires special treatment. The amounts of Tc-99 are relatively small, but the material is highly radioactive and mobile in the environment. Therefore, debris that's contaminated with technetium won't qualify for disposal at DOE's Oak Ridge nuclear landfill and must be sent to the Nevada Test Site for disposal in the desert. Segregating the Tc-99 materials and shipping them off-site is time-consuming and costly.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/nov/11/doe-ponders-options-cost-of-k-25-cleanup/>

November 10, 2009

YUCCA MOUNTAIN: Memo casts doubt on license for Yucca repository, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

The Obama administration intends to stop the pursuit of a license for the planned Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository in December, according to internal budget documents from the Department of Energy. "All license defense activities will be terminated in December 2009," said a draft Program Decision Memorandum that was attached to an Oct. 23 memo from DOE Chief Financial Officer Steve Isakowitz. The documents obtained by the Review-Journal said that decisions for a revised 2011 budget request "are draft until signed by the deputy secretary. ... We do not expect the information to change." Pre-hearings began this year in Las Vegas on whether to build a maze of tunnels inside Yucca Mountain to store 77,000 tons of highly radioactive spent reactor fuel and defense waste. The location is about 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/memo-casts-doubt-on-license-for-yucca-repository-69639342.html>

November 9, 2009

Hanford aerial survey saves time and money, *Nuclear Engineering International*

By using aerial surveys to measure radioactive contamination in the soil, operators at the Hanford Site in Washington State have saved an estimated \$700,000, speeding up cleanup by months. In late September, a Bell 412/HP helicopter made several passes over a portion of the 586-square-mile government site that produced plutonium from the 1940s to the 1980s. Detectors and electronics on the aircraft recorded the type and location of contamination. Data collected by the helicopter is helping engineers focus cleanup efforts on several areas of shallow soil contamination in the BC Control Area, which covers approximately 13 square miles. The surveys were required before cleanup of the contaminated soil began in October. The helicopter was flown at about 80 m.p.h. and at a specified height to avoid disturbing the soil, minimizing disturbance of the shrub-steppe ecosystem. The aerial surveys took days as opposed to eight months for ground-level measurements, allowing cleanup to begin sooner.

<http://www.neimagazine.com/story.asp?sectioncode=132&storyCode=2054649>

November 9, 2009

Hanford Advisory Board says to empty tanks more quickly, *Tri-City Herald*

More aggressive deadlines for emptying radioactive waste from leak prone underground tanks should be included in a proposed settlement agreement, the Hanford Advisory Board says. That was one of several recommendations the board made last week concerning a proposed agreement between the Department of Energy and the state of Washington that would end a lawsuit brought by the state. The board continues its opposition to further consideration of bulk vitrification for supplemental treatment of low activity

radioactive waste. It also continues to press for the start of treatment of low activity waste at the main vitrification plant under construction, the Waste Treatment Plant, before the entire plant is ready to operate. In addition the board earlier had advised that a cost and schedule outlook for remaining environmental cleanup work be completed before the state agreed to changes in legal deadlines.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2009/story/14395.html>

November 3, 2009

House panel OKs bill to ban importing foreign N-waste, *Deseret News*

A House subcommittee endorsed Tuesday a bill to ban importing foreign, low-level radioactive waste — which would block an EnergySolutions proposal to import 20,000 tons of it from Italy, process it in Tennessee and dump it in Utah's western desert. EnergySolutions conceded after the vote that the bill pushed by Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Utah, and Bart Gordon, D-Tenn., likely will soon pass the full House, but said the Senate may block it. Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the House Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Environment, said before his panel passed the bill on a voice vote, "We on the committee will not allow the United States to be the world's dumping ground."

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705341746/House-panel-OKs-bill-to-ban-importing-foreign-N-waste.html>