

News from Around the Complex

July 2007

July 30, 2007

Department of Energy to Award \$16 Million for GNEP Studies: Teams to Provide Analysis on Technology Development, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that four consortia have been selected to receive up to \$16 million for technical and supporting studies to support President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). AREVA Federal Services, LLC; EnergySolutions, LLC; GE-Hitachi Nuclear Americas, LLC; and General Atomics will each lead teams in developing the cost, scope and schedule for conceptual design studies for an initial fuel recycling center and advanced recycling reactor for GNEP. DOE will negotiate the final terms, under cooperative agreements, with the selected applicants and awards are expected to be finalized by the end of September 2007.

<http://energy.gov/news/5287.htm>

July 28, 2007

Reactor cleanup to resume: Work halted at Molten Salt site after incidents in 2006, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE — The long-delayed cleanup work at the Molten Salt Reactor will resume in September, a Department of Energy spokesman said Friday. Virtually no work has been done at the old reactor for the past year and a half because of persistent problems, including a fluorine leak in May 2006 and subsequent allegations that workers were goofing off and possibly smoking marijuana at the site. A number of safety reviews have been conducted in recent months to prepare for decommissioning of the reactor, which has been shut down since 1969. When work resumes, the focus will be on chemically extracting the uranium-233 from tanks that contain tons of highly radioactive fuel salts, said John Shewairy, the public affairs chief in the DOE's Oak Ridge office.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/jul/28/reactor-cleanup-to-resume/>

July 28, 2007

Cleanup done at diffusion plant: Waste from 50 years of uranium processing removed, *Chillicothe Gazette*

The U.S. Department of Energy announced the completion of waste cleanup of more than 49,000 containers from the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. Waste was removed from Building X-7725, which was designed to assemble and rebuild centrifuge machines at the plant but was converted into a waste storage facility due to its large floor space. "Today we celebrate the removal of this waste," said William Murphie, manager of the Portsmouth/Paducah Project with the U.S. Department of Energy. "It was no small feat to remove waste generated from more than 50 years of uranium processes." Waste removal at the building began in 1993 by LATA/Parallax Portsmouth LLC, private contractors hired by the Department of Energy. The removal process was slow, as the materials on site contained mixed with low-level waste, which means it had both hazardous and radioactive components.

<http://www.chillicothe Gazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070728/NEWS01/707280304/1002>

July 28, 2007

Mound cleanup to cost \$32.5 million: But Congress has earmarked just \$30 million for cleanup of old nuclear weapons plant, *Dayton Daily News*

MIAMISBURG — Another cost overrun in the environmental cleanup of the old Mound nuclear weapons plant has local officials worried the federal government will walk away from the project before contractors are done removing all the toxic hazards. Federal officials say radioactive and chemical contamination in an old landfill is contained and isn't a health threat. But leaving the toxins on the plant site could hamper efforts to market it as an industrial park, said Mike Grauwelman, president of the Miamisburg Mound Community Improvement Corp. He has asked to meet with Energy Department officials on the matter. Grauwelman is concerned the department will cease cleanup of an old landfill when the \$30 million that Congress allocated for the project is exhausted.

<http://www.daytondailynews.com/n/content/oh/story/news/local/2007/07/28/ddn072807mound.html>

July 26, 2007

Sludge contained in Hanford's toxic K West Basin, *Tri-City Herald*

Cameras inside Hanford's K West Basin have something new to take a picture of -- bare concrete. Hanford workers have finished vacuuming the bulk of radioactive sludge from the floor of the basin into underwater containers.***Completion of the task allows DOE to meet a revised legal deadline and a commitment to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board to have the sludge in containers by the end of this month***DOE faces a November 2009 deadline to have the sludge treated but likely will miss that deadline by a year or two. Changes are now being made to the design of the treatment system to solve predicted problems and prevent a possibly longer delay in getting the sludge treated.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9163934p-9080421c.html>

July 25, 2007

Cost of Y-12 Project Still a Moving Target, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

George Dials, general manager at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant, earlier this year said the cost of the proposed Uranium Processing Facility could reach \$2 billion. He said the working estimate was between \$1.4 billion and \$2 billion. The high end would be double the earlier estimate of about \$1 billion. The UPF would replace the warhead plant's main production complex. Tom D'Agostino, nominee to become administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, did not want to discuss the cost of UPF when he was in town recently. He bristled at suggestions that the cost may have doubled. D'Agostino, who oversees the entire nuclear weapons complex, acknowledged that another Y-12 project — the Highly Enriched Uranium Facility — had doubled in cost. But he said it's too early to place a firm price on the UPF.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/jul/25/cost-of-y-12-projectstill-a-moving-target/>

July 25, 2007

Crib crawler travels Hanford's plutonium wasteland, *Tri-City Herald*

A robot dubbed the "crib crawler" has been sent into an underground trench at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant where no person has been in more than 30 years. It's taking pictures of one of the nuclear reservation's most unusual waste disposal trenches, where liquid contaminated with plutonium was dumped into the ground from 1955 to 62. The trench once had so much plutonium built up at its bottom that Hanford workers feared an uncontrolled nuclear reaction. Now the

Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford are collecting information to develop plans to clean up the radioactively contaminated trench, called the Z-9 Crib.
<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9161205p-9077794c.html>

July 24, 2007

Y-12 modernization report due out nearly a year ago, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*
OAK RIDGE — The government's preparation of an environmental impact statement to support modernization of the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant is running about a year behind schedule. Steven Wyatt, a federal spokesman at Y-12, said the report's delay is due to the "numerous and diverse public comments" received during the initial phase of the project. The Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement was required after the National Nuclear Security Administration, a part of U.S. Department of Energy, proposed building a new Uranium Processing Facility. Construction of the UPF, which would replace the plant's main production facility, is considered a major federal action. The project is estimated to cost about \$2 billion, nearly double the original estimate.
<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/jul/24/y-12-modernization-reportdue-out-nearly-a-year/>

July 23, 2007

Energy office reinvents itself: Legacy Management proves it's a high performer, *Federal Times*
The Energy Department's Office of Legacy Management (LM) was established in 2003 to serve as the steward for the nation's Cold War nuclear legacy. LM is responsible for the long-term surveillance and maintenance of environmental remedies, promotion of beneficial reuse, and the records and information management associated with more than 70 former nuclear weapons production sites in 26 states. LM is also responsible for the administration of contractor pension plans and retirement benefits for more than 12,000 former contractor workers. In 2005, LM initiated a rigorous self-assessment using the tools and techniques contained in the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, Performance of Commercial Activities and the high-performance organization principles contained in the Government Accountability Office's Commercial Activities Panel report.
<http://federaltimes.com/index.php?S=2918632>

July 23, 2007

Lawmakers back plan for Paducah plant work: Company seeks feds' OK for re-enrichment idea, *Courier-Journal (Kentucky)*
WASHINGTON -- For years the canisters of depleted uranium stored in Paducah have been considered simply waste. Now, however, those canisters could be key to keeping the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, with its roughly 2,200 employees, open beyond its planned closing in 2012 or 2013. The price of uranium is soaring, in part because of a temporary supply shortage and the widespread belief that nuclear power may be making a comeback given rising energy costs. And the United States Enrichment Corp., the private company that runs the Paducah plant, is proposing to the Department of Energy that some of the depleted uranium hexafluoride in its 39,000 storage canisters be re-enriched -- that is, made usable again.
<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070723/NEWS01/707230416/1008>

July 23, 2007

DOE to cut Washington Closure's pay, *Tri-City Herald*
Washington Closure Hanford could lose \$1 million in pay after failing to have a

required safety plan in place this spring for its work to clean up Hanford along the Columbia River. Since Washington Closure started the work nearly two years ago "there have been a number of incidents," according to a letter to Washington Closure from the Department of Energy. It said DOE believes there is a direct correlation between the incidents and the contractor's lack of progress in implementing a formal safety plan, called an Integrated Safety Management System.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9155262p-9071796c.html>

July 20, 2007

Hanford Waste Treatment Plant: Department of Energy Needs to Strengthen Controls over Contractor Payments and Project Assets, GAO Report

In December 2000, the Department of Energy (DOE) awarded Bechtel National, Inc. (Bechtel) a contract to design and construct the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP), one of the largest nuclear waste cleanup projects in the nation. Originally expected to cost \$4.3 billion and be completed in 2011, DOE now estimates that WTP will cost over \$12.2 billion and be completed in late 2019. Weaknesses in DOE's management and oversight of contractors led GAO to designate DOE contract management as a high-risk area since 1990. GAO was asked to determine whether (1) DOE's internal controls are designed to provide reasonable assurance against improper WTP payments and (2) DOE's controls reasonably ensure proper accountability for WTP assets. GAO reviewed fiscal year 2005 and 2006 internal controls by analyzing data and documents, interviewing DOE and contractor staff, and physically observing property items.

Report available at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07888.pdf>

July 20, 2007

DOE to Weigh Alternatives for Greater Than Class C Low-Level Waste Disposal, DOE Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that it will evaluate disposal options for Greater Than Class C (GTCC) low-level radioactive waste (LLW) generated from the decommissioning of nuclear power plants, medical activities and nuclear research. DOE delivered to the Federal Register this week a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will evaluate how and where to safely dispose of GTCC LLW that is currently stored at commercial nuclear power plants and other generator sites across the country. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires DOE to report to Congress on its evaluation of safe disposal options for this commercial waste.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/5255.htm>

Additional information on Greater than Class C waste and the Notice of Intent are available on the [Greater than Class C EIS Information Center](#).

July 19, 2007

U.S. plans to convert more weapons plutonium to commercial fuel, International Herald Tribune

AP - The Bush administration plans to convert more weapons-grade plutonium into commercial reactor fuel than previously planned. A senior Energy Department official said Thursday the department has concluded that additional tons of plutonium can be taken from dismantled warheads and disposed of, beyond the 34 tons (31 metric tons) already planned to be converted to commercial fuel. "It will be significant," Thomas D'Agostino, head of the department's nuclear weapons program, said in an interview, when asked how much additional plutonium might be set aside for conversion. D'Agostino said he did not want to provide a specific number of tons

because the matter was still being discussed with the Pentagon. Defense officials establish warhead needs.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/07/20/america/NA-GEN-US-Plutonium.php>

July 17, 2007

Uranium Tailings Pile Near Colorado River to Be Moved, *Environment News Service*

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - The nuclear services company EnergySolutions has been awarded the U.S. Department of Energy contract to clean up the radioactive Atlas Mill Tailings pile that sits beside the Colorado River near Moab, Utah. The 16 million ton pile of uranium mill tailings is leaching into the river and into the groundwater of local communities, posing health and safety concerns for 25 million downstream users in Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and California. "I'm delighted with this contract and the opportunity to clean up and remove these materials from the banks of the Colorado River," said Steve Creamer, CEO of EnergySolutions, based in Salt Lake City.***The 435 acre Moab site is located on the west bank of the Colorado River three miles northwest of the City of Moab in Grand County, Utah. About 130 acres contain the uranium mill tailings.

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jul2007/2007-07-17-09.asp>

July 17, 2007

Department of Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission Increase Cooperation to Advance Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) expanded cooperation for President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed on Friday by DOE's GNEP Deputy Program Manager Paul Lisowski and NRC Executive Director for Operations Luis Reyes. The MOU establishes the foundation for increased cooperation between DOE and NRC on technological research and engineering studies and marks another important milestone towards closing the nuclear fuel cycle in the United States.

<http://energy.gov/news/5245.htm>

July 17, 2007

Storage space tight at Y-12: Safety board report says there is significant backlog of enriched uranium solutions, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE — Persistent problems with uranium-processing operations are creating a storage crunch and other issues at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. A June 1 report by staff of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board said there was a significant backlog of enriched-uranium solutions stored in tanks and "safe bottles" at the Oak Ridge plant. Because weapons-grade uranium is fissionable, solutions must be kept in tall, skinny bottles or other containers specially configured to prevent the material from reaching nuclear criticality. "Additional solution storage space will be needed, or an impact on other site activities may occur in the near future," the staff report said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/jul/17/storage-space-tight-at-y-12/>

July 17, 2007

Official says MOX project is right on schedule, *Aiken Standard*

Shaw/Areva MOX Services is on target to begin construction of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at the Savannah River Site Aug. 1, said company president and chief operating officer David Stinson. "We're close to starting," he told Rotary Club of

Aiken members Monday. "The objective is to convert 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium to MOX fuel for use in commercial power reactors." The current deadline for the completion of construction is 2014. Following startup testing, the facility would begin operations in 2016 with a disposition rate of up to 3.5 tons of plutonium oxide each year. The mission is supposed to end in 2035, although it could be extended to 2038, Stinson said.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/289370915910505.php>

July 13, 2007

Feds puzzled by gamma radiation higher than normal near wildfire,

The Salt Lake Tribune

A puzzle has sprung from the flames of the Milford Flat Fire: What's pumping radiation into the air? The National Nuclear Security Administration said Thursday its radiation monitors in the area are showing gamma radiation spikes seven times higher than the normal background. But before anyone runs to the doctor, it's worth pointing out that even those spikes, if someone breathed them for seven hours straight, produce less than one-2,000th of the radiation dose a Utahn normally gets in a year. "You're talking about a very small dose," said NNSA spokesman Darwin Morgan. The agency, which had proposed a massive, non-nuclear explosion experiment at the Nevada Test Site last year, monitors the air for radiation at 29 monitoring stations in Utah, California and Nevada. The agency canceled the so-called Divine Strake test after hearing from thousands of Utahans who complained that the explosion would send radiation-tainted debris into their air and onto their landscape.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_6364853

July 12, 2007

Energy Dept. wants more uranium mining, *Telluride Daily Planet*

It left scars on Western Slope hillsides and the miners who carved it from the earth, its legacy equal parts potential and disaster. But now its time may have come again. Last week, the Department of Energy announced its intent to offer new leases on 25 plots of land rich in uranium. It said that increased mining in the region would cause "no significant environmental impact" to the area. The DOE also announced its intent to renew the 13 active leases for another 10 years, effectively rolling out the welcome mat for mining companies. Some 27,000 acres in the Uravan Mineral Belt, which arcs west from here to Utah through the bust town of Uravan, will be available for uranium mining, though not all of those are new to industry activity. The decision may swiftly ignite another uranium boom, as the DOE could take bids on the new leases in the coming months, according to Project Manager Tracy Plessinger. The price of uranium jumped from less than \$10 per pound in 2001 to \$134 this week, making the price of doing business worth paying. The federal government alone estimates it will make \$18 million a year for the next 10 years in royalties, Plessinger said.

<http://www.telluridegateway.com/articles/2007/07/13/news/news02.txt>

July 12, 2007

DOE's Former Rocky Flats Weapons Production Site to Become National Wildlife Refuge, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced the transfer of nearly 4,000 acres of its former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons production site to the Department of the Interior's (DOI) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for use as a National Wildlife Refuge. After more than a decade of environmental cleanup work, the transfer creates the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, 16 miles

northwest of Denver, Colorado, and marks completion of the regulatory milestones to transform a formerly contaminated site into an environmental asset.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/5216.htm>

July 11, 2007

New buildings, new era for Y-12, Oakridger

Two new privately financed buildings at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge will generate more than \$1 million annually in city and county property tax revenues, officials said at a Tuesday morning ribbon-cutting ceremony. According to City Manager Jim O'Connor, Oak Ridge will collect about half of the new revenues — or roughly \$530,000 in city property taxes. The Y-12 event, held at the recently completed New Hope facility, was one of two very well-attended building ceremonies held in Oak Ridge on Tuesday. The other was at Oak Ridge Associated Universities later in the day. Officials at the Y-12 ceremony said the two new buildings, which had a combined cost of \$150 million, will help transform Y-12, saving lots of money and allowing employees to move out of older, dilapidated buildings into newer consolidated ones. Y-12 was built in the 1940s to help enrich uranium for atomic weapons. "These two facilities change the face of Y-12," said U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn.

http://www.oakridger.com/stories/071107/new_183650950.shtml

July 11, 2007

Hastings pushes B Reactor standing, Tri-City Herald

The U.S. Department of Interior needs to stop delaying consideration of Hanford's B Reactor for National Historic Landmark status, according to a letter from Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash. "The B Reactor played a pivotal role in our nation's history and deserves full and fair consideration by the Park Service," Hastings wrote in a letter Tuesday to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. A hearing on B Reactor by the National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee had been expected in April. That was delayed until June and now until possibly October when the board is expected to meet next. ***DOE's plan has been to cocoon all nine plutonium production reactors built along the Columbia River during World War II and the Cold War. The process includes tearing them down to little more than their radioactive core, reroofing them and sealing them to let their radiation decay over 75 years. Washington Closure is now working on N Reactor and historic B Reactor is next on its cocooning list, since delays in removing sludge from the basins of K East and K West Reactors mean that cocooning them will be delayed past Washington Closure's seven-year contract. Five reactors already are cocooned. However, Washington Closure's contract calls for beginning work to cocoon B Reactor no earlier than October 2009, said Todd Nelson, spokesman for Washington Closure. DOE also has reserved the right to withdraw the reactor from Washington Closure's cleanup schedule if a way is found to make it into a museum.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/9122648p-9038941c.html>

July 9, 2007

INL to conduct explosives test in E. Idaho desert, Seattle Post-Intelligencer

BOISE, Idaho -- Bomb experts at the Idaho National Laboratory will detonate explosive blasts sometime this week in a remote sage-and-grass corner of the 890-square-mile atomic research reservation in a new program aimed at helping design buildings better able to withstand terror attacks. U.S. Department of Energy engineers will be testing the effects of thousands of pounds of vehicle-borne explosives on buildings, protective barriers and materials. Only one test will be conducted this week, INL spokesman Ethan Huffman said. Ensuing tests would occur

weekly and monthly. While explosives tests at other U.S. sites, including the Nevada Test Site near Las Vegas, are geared to improving weapons systems, these tests at INL are aimed at making safer buildings, bridges and tunnels.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_ID_Explosives_Range.html

July 6, 2007

Y-12 completes major concrete placement at uranium storage facility, *The Oak Ridger*

Construction of the new uranium storage facility at the National Nuclear Security Administration's Y-12 National Security Complex completed the third major continuous concrete placement in late June. The concrete pour in the storage area was the third largest same-day placement of concrete on the project to date, according to information provided by the Public Affairs and Communications office of BWXT Y-12. The largest pour to date was the foundation pour in 2005. "A train of some 60 concrete trucks started arriving at Y-12 at 4 a.m.," the BWXT Y-12 release stated. "The trucks carried about 600 cubic yards of concrete, which was continuously placed, completing the task around 9:30 a.m.

http://www.oakridger.com/stories/070607/new_182557411.shtml

July 2, 2007

Energy Department Awards Small Business Contract for Legacy Management Work to S.M. Stoller Corporation, *US Department of Energy press release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced the award of a prime contract for the Department's Office of Legacy Management (LM) Support Services work to S.M. Stoller Corporation for surveillance and maintenance and technical support at more than 100 of DOE's legacy sites. The three-year contract, with one two-year extension option for a total of five years, is valued at approximately \$170 million over the life of the contract and is one of the largest 100% small business contracts within DOE. The contract includes responsibility for legacy sites that have been closed and no longer support the Department's ongoing national security, energy and science missions, including the Rocky Flats and Fernald sites.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/5200.htm>

July 2, 2007

Domenici: Building for nuke pits needed, *Santa Fe New Mexican*

LOS ALAMOS -- The only thing stopping Los Alamos National Laboratory from being the country's permanent center for production of nuclear warhead triggers is lack of a new building, U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said Monday at the lab. Domenici was on hand to celebrate recent federal certification of the lab's latest trigger, which is called a pit. Los Alamos plans to make 10 pits this year, and eventually increase production to 30 to 50 per year. Asked for his position on making Los Alamos the permanent pit production center, Domenici said, "Well, I think we might be just ... playing with words. I think we are, with the delivery of this."

<http://www.freewmexican.com/news/64190.html#>

July 2, 2007

DOE seeks contractor for \$8.2 billion in tank farm work, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy released its request today for bids for \$8.2 billion of work at Hanford's tank farms. The farms include 177 underground tanks holding 53 million gallons of radioactive waste from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. *** The request for proposals specifies that 15 percent of

work in the contract be done by small businesses. The contract would cover five years with a possible extension for five more years.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/breaking/story/9099308p-9015502c.html>

July 2, 2007

Los Alamos lab delivers first bomb-ready nuke trigger in 18 years, *Santa Fe New Mexican*

Los Alamos National Laboratory has delivered to the federal government the first plutonium core certified for use in nuclear warheads in 18 years. The National Nuclear Security Administration certified the plutonium pit — a softball-size sphere of enriched uranium encased in stainless steel — in early June. The pit, used as a trigger for nuclear weapons, was delivered shortly after that to the NNSA's Pantex plant, 17 miles northeast of Amarillo, Texas. Kevin Roark, a lab spokesman, said Monday. Pantex maintains the safety, security and reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. Politicians — including Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., and Rep. Heather Wilson, R-N.M. — along with Energy Department and Defense Department officials gathered in Los Alamos Monday to "congratulate the lab for a job well done," Roark said.

<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/64163.html>