

## News from Around the Complex

*December 1 – December 31, 2008*

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

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December 31, 2008

### **Special Report: Management Challenges at the Department of Energy, DOE Inspector General**

[Excerpt from page 5, "Environmental Cleanup"] Our finding at Los Alamos is consistent with a broader observation made recently by Department management that the agency would not meet some milestones and obligations contained in environmental agreements that have been negotiated over many years. The Los Alamos cleanup effort highlights just one example of the monumental task that the Department faces to ensure that contaminated materials and radioactive waste are disposed of in a safe, timely, and cost-effective manner. Overseeing the largest cleanup effort in the world, the Department has made significant progress at several locations. However, the Department continues to experience delays and cost overruns associated with programs at various sites. As has been the case in previous years, Environmental Cleanup remains a management challenge that warrants significant attention on the part of Departmental management.

Full Report available at [http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0808\\_\(2\).pdf](http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0808_(2).pdf)

Dec. 30, 2008

### **Gibbons names Loux replacement: Ex-Sparks mayor to lead opposition to Yucca Mountain, Las Vegas Review-Journal**

A former Sparks mayor and television sports broadcaster is the new executive director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects. Gov. Jim Gibbons announced Monday the appointment of Bruce Breslow, who has served in several local and state government posts. The agency leads the state's opposition to federal plans for a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, about 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. "I know Bruce to be a good and fair man," Gibbons said in a prepared statement. "I trust his leadership of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects will bring new ideas and a renewed level of tenacity to the fight against locating the nation's nuclear dump in Nevada."

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/36871574.html>

December 29, 2008

### **End of Hanford plutonium shipments in sight, Tri-City Herald**

Work to get weapons-grade plutonium off the Hanford site is running ahead of schedule, and all the weapons plutonium may be gone by early June, according to the Department of Energy. More than half the plutonium already has been shipped off site. With good weather, the work could finish even sooner than June, said Doug Shoop, deputy manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office. DOE had planned to have all the plutonium shipped to the Savannah River, S.C., nuclear site by the end of September 2009 when shipments started in fall 2007. During the Cold War plutonium was produced at Hanford and made into metal buttons the size of hockey pucks at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant to be shipped off site for conversion for weapons use.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/428591.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/428591.html)

December 24, 2008

**NRC recertifies USEC's operations: Plants in Piketon and Paducah receive five-year extensions, *Chillicothe Gazette***

BETHESDA, Md. - USEC Inc. announced Tuesday the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has officially recertified USEC's operations at the gaseous diffusion uranium enrichment plants in Piketon and Paducah, Ky., for five more years. The renewed certificates of compliance indicate USEC's operations at the plants comply with all NRC safety, public health, environmental and security regulations. The plants are required to be recertified by the NRC every five years, with the current certificates set to expire Dec. 31. In consultation with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the NRC also is required to submit a report on the operation of the plants to Congress. Based on its review of the certificate renewal applications, the NRC staff has concluded "in combination with the existing certificate conditions, USEC provides reasonable assurance of adequate safety, safeguards and security and compliance with NRC requirements," according to the NRC notice published in the Federal Register about the renewal.

<http://chillicothe Gazette.com/article/20081224/NEWS01/812240320/1002/rss01>

December 24, 2008

**Wyden: Lax regulations allow radioactive waste on icy highways, *KVAL News (Eugene, OR)***

LA GRANDE, Ore. -- Oregon's senior senator says lax regulations allowed a truck hauling low-level radioactive waste to travel icy Interstate 84 and jack-knife Monday afternoon. A hazardous materials crew determined the trailer did not breach in the crash. "Fortunately, no one was hurt and no hazardous material leaked into the environment," Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said in a statement. "Nevertheless, that truck never should have been allowed to travel through Oregon in those conditions. When you're moving a cargo that has a half-life of several thousand years, it won't hurt to wait a few hours or days until the roads are safe," Wyden said. The truck from R&R Trucking Inc. was en route from Oakridge, Tenn., to Perma Fix Northwest Inc. in Richland, Wash., a facility near the Hanford Nuclear Reservation that serves "offices, laboratories, and processing facilities for the treatment of Low Level Radioactive and Low Level Mixed Waste."

<http://www.kval.com/news/local/36700979.html>

December 20, 2008

**Where Does It All Go?, *The New York Times***

[Editorial] The Energy Department has recommended expanding the amount of nuclear waste that could be stored in an underground repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada to avoid the need for a second dump. It is a sensible proposal that also is an urgent reminder of how little progress has been made in solving one of the most vexing problems of the nuclear age. Tens of thousands of tons of spent fuel and military waste have been piling up at temporary storage sites around the country while the federal government has struggled, unsuccessfully, to find a long-term solution. Expert groups have long recommended that the nuclear waste should be buried deep underground in a stable, leak-resistant geological formation that would keep it bottled up for many millennia. Yucca Mountain, the only site now under consideration, has run into so many technical problems and so much political opposition that its future is uncertain. The site is still awaiting licensing from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/20/opinion/20sat2.html?ref=opinion>

December 19, 2008

**Questions raised on West Valley decisions, *The Buffalo News***

ASHFORD — State energy experts are asking the U. S. Department of Energy to take a closer look at scientific assumptions that could be used as a basis for future decisions in long term cleanup at the West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority presents this "view" in the first few pages of the Department of Energy's newly released draft environmental impact study, which provides four cleanup and management possibilities for a range of low-level to highly radioactive wastes left over from operations at the closed nuclear fuel reprocessing facility near West Valley. The first part of a two-phase option — preferred by both DOE and state authority — would remove some dangerous structures and radioactive sources of groundwater contamination.  
<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/otherwny/story/527510.html>

December 19, 2008

**Boeing ordered to remove tainted soil: Stormwater is carrying away contaminants at former test site, *Ventura County Star***

Boeing Co., the owner of a former rocket engine and nuclear test site south of Simi Valley, has been ordered to remove contaminated soil to keep pollutants found in storm water from running off the site. Heavy metals, perchlorate and other toxic materials have been found in stormwater running off the Santa Susana Field Laboratory at two outfalls that drain into Dayton Canyon Creek and the Arroyo Simi. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board issued the order on Dec. 3. Stormwater traversing the field lab has contained pollutants that exceed limits set in a permit previously issued by the board. In 2007, Boeing was fined for exceeding limits of chromium, dioxin, lead, mercury and other pollutants in wastewater and stormwater runoff over a period of nearly 18 months.

[http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2008/dec/19/boeing-ordered-to-remove-tainted-soil/?partner=yahoo\\_headlines](http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2008/dec/19/boeing-ordered-to-remove-tainted-soil/?partner=yahoo_headlines)

December 19, 2008

**Hanford's F Reactor cleanup nearly complete, *Tri-City Herald***

Washington Closure Hanford and the Department of Energy have met a legal deadline to have most of the waste sites near Hanford's F Reactor cleaned up, including digging up carcasses of animals used for radiation exposure research. "The 100 F Area is almost finished," said Rod Lobos, an environmental engineer with the Environmental Protection Agency, the regulator for the work. "We're very happy with the progress." F Reactor operated from 1945 to 1965 as one of nine Hanford reactors to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program. Also near F Reactor was a laboratory and an animal farm used through the early years of the Cold War for research on radiation exposure on plants and animals.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/12591.html>

December 17, 2008

**Plan cements Pantex's nuke role, *Amarillo Globe-News***

The National Nuclear Security Administration approved a long-term plan Tuesday that keeps nuclear weapons assembly work at the Pantex Plant and cements its role in high-explosives manufacturing. Pantex, located 17 miles northeast of Amarillo, assembles and dismantles nuclear weapons, modernizes older warheads and stores tons of plutonium weapons cores, the nuclear hearts of modern atomic bombs and long-range missiles. The plan, unveiled Tuesday by NNSA Administrator Tom D'Agostino, includes three new Pantex facilities: an underground plutonium-storage complex, new high-explosives pressing operations and a \$172 million weapons-surveillance facility where warheads and bombs can be monitored for signs of aging.

The overall strategy would restructure the nation's complex of nuclear-weapons facilities and laboratories. Part of the plan would consolidate special nuclear materials at five NNSA locations. The NNSA's strategy also would remove large amounts of plutonium from California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory near San Francisco and transfer bomb-grade materials away from large urban areas.  
[http://www.amarillo.com/stories/121708/new\\_news13.shtml](http://www.amarillo.com/stories/121708/new_news13.shtml)

December 17, 2008

**Demolition begins on K-25 building: Uranium enrichment plant symbol of nuclear age, Knoxville News-Sentinel**

OAK RIDGE - Tuesday was a good day for a landmark demolition to begin. The misting rain helped keep down the dust from the crunching of beams and bricks, and the day's general dreariness seemed to underscore the fact that a piece of history was disappearing - a sad inevitability for many. The milelong K-25 building, a brawny symbol of the nuclear age when it was constructed 65 years ago, never looked worse for wear. With its siding already stripped away, exposing the base structure, K-25 appeared ready to come down, and shortly after 4 p.m. workers got started on a task that will take a couple of years and hundreds of millions of dollars to complete. Oak Ridge historian Bill Wilcox recalled the important role K-25 played in the Cold War, enriching much of the uranium for the nation's arsenal of nuclear weapons. For about 10 years following its startup in 1945, K-25 was the only U.S. facility capable of separating the U-235 needed for bombs, he said.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/dec/17/demolition-begins-on-k-25-building/>

December 16, 2008

**DOE Releases Excess Uranium Inventory Plan, DOE Press Release**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The United States Department of Energy (DOE) today issued its Excess Uranium Inventory Management Plan (the Plan), which outlines the Department's strategy for the management and disposition of its excess uranium inventories. The Plan highlights DOE's ongoing efforts to enhance national security and promote a healthy domestic nuclear infrastructure through the efficient and cost-effective management of its excess uranium inventories. The Department has a significant inventory of uranium that is excess to national defense needs and is expensive both to manage and secure.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/6798.htm>

December 15, 2008

**Washington's lawsuit over Hanford cleanup is timely and measured response to delays, The Seattle Times**

[Opinion] The Hanford nuclear site is the most dangerous contaminated site in the United States. Unfortunately, the federal government has failed to meet its commitment to clean up Hanford. That's why we recently asked the federal courts to require the U.S. Department of Energy to do what is required by federal and state law — and what the agency itself agreed to do in signing the Tri-Party Agreement in 1989. In its Nov. 28 editorial ("Is another Hanford suit really necessary?"), The Times said now isn't the time for litigation because of a concern cleanup could suffer budget repercussions in Congress. In the short term, The Times might be right. But Hanford is far from a short-term problem. We firmly believe the lawsuit we filed Nov. 26 increases the certainty that the Department of Energy will take seriously its obligations, including seeking the funding necessary to complete the cleanup. With it, we're forcing the federal government to make Hanford cleanup the priority. It must be.

[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2008523323\\_opin16gregoire.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2008523323_opin16gregoire.html).

December 12, 2008

**No Yucca Mountain, no Hanford cleanup, *Tacoma News Tribune***

[Editorial] To understand how the cleanup of Hanford depends on a nuclear waste repository in Nevada, work backward. Without the repository, there will be no permanent disposal of any of the nation's intensely radioactive reactor wastes. Opponents of the Yucca Mountain project talk vaguely of other possibilities, but there are no other possibilities in the real world. Yucca Mountain is more dry and isolated than any realistic alternative, and it's been studied to death for more than 20 years. Without permanent burial of reactor wastes, Hanford will be saddled with the radioactivity of 53 million gallons of waste now held in 177 steel tanks on the Eastern Washington reservation near the Tri-Cities. But that's just the beginning. The likely alternative to a repository – an alternative now favored by President-elect Barack Obama – is "interim" storage of all commercial nuclear power plant waste at secure federal sites.

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/opinion/story/565349.html>

December 9, 2008

**U.S. Department of Energy Provides Report to Congress on the Demonstration of the Interim Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel from Decommissioned Nuclear Power Reactor Sites, *DOE Press Release***

Washington D.C. – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today released its Report to Congress on the Demonstration of the Interim Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel from Decommissioned Nuclear Power Reactor Sites (DOE/RW-0596, December 2008). The report was prepared pursuant to direction in the House Appropriations Committee Report that accompanied the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 that the Department develop a plan to take custody of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) currently stored at decommissioned reactor sites.

<http://www.energy.gov/news/6792.htm>

Report available at:

[http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info\\_library/program\\_docs/ES\\_Interim\\_Storage\\_Report\\_120108.pdf](http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info_library/program_docs/ES_Interim_Storage_Report_120108.pdf)

December 9, 2008

**Secretary Bodman Provides Report to the President and the Congress on the Need for a Second Repository for Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste, *DOE Press Release***

Washington D.C. – U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today transmitted The Report to the President and the Congress by the Secretary of Energy on the Need for a Second Repository to the President and the Congress. The report was submitted in accordance with section 161 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, as amended (NWPA). Section 161 requires the Secretary to report to the President and to Congress on or after January 1, 2007, but not later than January 1, 2010, on the need for a second repository for the Nation's spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLW).

<http://www.energy.gov/news/6791.htm>

Report available at:

[http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info\\_library/program\\_docs/Second\\_Repository\\_Rpt\\_120908.pdf](http://www.ocrwm.doe.gov/info_library/program_docs/Second_Repository_Rpt_120908.pdf)

December 9, 2008

**Panel supports expansion of vit plant, *Tri-City Herald***

Expansion of the \$12.3 billion vitrification plant would be the surest bet for treating radioactive waste that the plant as now designed can't treat in a reasonable amount of time, an expert panel commissioned by the Department of Energy has concluded. Other options include bulk vitrification, improving efficiency of the main vitrification plant and an early start-up of part of the main vitrification plant that would treat low-activity radioactive waste. However, the panel said a decision on how to treat the excess waste could be delayed until 2017. That would give DOE more time to resolve some technical issues. When DOE started considering options for treating the rest of the waste, the vit plant was expected to be operating in 2011. But now that's been pushed back to 2019 and technical questions that could affect plant's capacity remain unanswered.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/410569.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/410569.html)

December 9, 2008

**Cumbria County Council Cabinet agrees to explore nuclear waste options,**  
*eGov Monitor (UK)*

Cumbria County Council has agreed to make a without commitment 'expression of interest' in the formal Government process to find a location for a deep geological nuclear waste repository in the UK. The decision, taken at a Cabinet meeting in Workington today (December 9), allows the county council to discuss the best solution with the Government for disposing of higher level radioactive waste, but does not involve any commitment that Cumbria will eventually host an underground repository. The expression of interest covers Copeland, where an expression of interest has already been submitted by Copeland Borough Council. The decision made by cabinet today also gives the flexibility for the county council's expression of interest to extend to all of west Cumbria if Allerdale Borough Council decides to make its own expression of interest.

<http://www.egovmonitor.com/node/22514>

December 8, 2008

**EPA, HAB concerned over DOE deadlines,** *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy chose to suspend work to meet 23 legal cleanup deadlines at Hanford without making adequate attempts to work with its regulators, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA and the Hanford Advisory Board reacted last week to DOE's announcement that it would miss the deadlines for cleanup in central Hanford because of too little funding in the budget for fiscal 2009. DOE wants to focus the money it does have in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1 on cleaning up the area near the Columbia River and preventing contaminated ground water from leaving central Hanford.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/409422.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/409422.html)

December 5, 2008

**Notice of Availability of the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Decommissioning and/or Long-Term Stewardship at the West Valley Demonstration Project and Western New York Nuclear Service Center**  
**AGENCY: Department of Energy,** *Federal Register Notice*

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announces the availability of the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Decommissioning and/or Long-Term Stewardship at the West Valley Demonstration Project and Western New York Nuclear Service Center (DOE/EIS-0226-D [Revised]) (referred to as the "Draft Decommissioning and/or Long-Term Stewardship EIS" or "Draft EIS"). This Draft EIS revises the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Completion of the West Valley Demonstration Project and Closure or Long-Term Management of Facilities at the

Western New York Nuclear Service Center (DOE/EIS-0226-D) issued for public comment in January 1996 (referred to as the "1996 Cleanup and Closure Draft EIS").

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2008\\_register&docid=fr05de08-63.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2008_register&docid=fr05de08-63.pdf)

December 5, 2008

**The New Team: Steven Chu, *The New York Times***

Being considered for: Energy secretary

Would bring to the job: Impeccable credentials in science management and as an experimental physicist; he shared the 1997 Nobel prize in physics. Dr. Chu, an Asian-American, would also bring diversity to the cabinet.

Is linked to Mr. Obama: In no obvious way.

In his own words: New houses could be made energy efficient with an investment of an extra \$1,000, "but the American consumer would rather have a granite countertop." (At a lecture in Washington on energy options, June 25, 2008)

Used to work as: Chairman of the physics department at Stanford, and head of the electronics research laboratory at Bell Labs. Since 2004, he has been director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, which has 4,000 employees and a budget of about \$650 million. The lab is owned by the Energy Department and operated under contract by the University of California; Dr. Chu was chosen for the job by the university but approved by the Energy Department. He shifted the lab's work more heavily into research into advanced biofuels, artificial photosynthesis and other solar energy research. He has been a vocal proponent of vigorous steps to control greenhouse gas emissions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/05/us/politics/05web-chu.html>

December 4, 2008

**Nuclear hearings: Storage of waste is a concern, *The State (South Carolina)***

With Nevada storage site out, radioactive waste would have to be kept in Jenkinsville. SCE&G would have to store radioactive waste produced by new reactors at its Jenkinsville nuclear plant until the federal government finds a place to bury it, a utility executive said Wednesday. Steve Byrne, vice president of nuclear operations, said the plans for two new reactors the utility wants to build call for waste such as spent fuel rods to be stored above ground in concrete-enclosed casks. Byrne offered his remarks to the state Public Service Commission, which is hearing an application submitted by South Carolina Electric & Gas and its partner, state-operated Santee Cooper, to build two 1,117-megawatt reactor units, costing \$9.8 billion, at the V.C. Summer Nuclear Station.

<http://www.thestate.com/business/story/610455.html>

December 3, 2008

**DOE would expand nuclear dump in Nevada, *Tri-City Herald***

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Energy Department will tell Congress in the coming weeks it should begin looking for a second permanent site to bury nuclear waste, or approve a large expansion of the proposed waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. Edward Sproat, head of the department's civilian nuclear waste program, said Thursday the 77,000-ton limit Congress put on the capacity of the proposed Yucca waste dump will fall far short of what will be needed and has to be expanded, or another dump built elsewhere in the country. The future of the Yucca Mountain project is anything but certain. President-elect Obama has said he doesn't believe the desert site 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas is suitable for keeping highly radioactive used reactor fuel up to a million years and believes other options should

be explored. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., has vowed to block the project.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/12495.html>

December 3, 2008

**Nuclear cleanup to cost billions: State-funded study puts almost \$10 billion price on effort at West Valley, *Times-Union***

While it will cost taxpayers billions to clean out dangerous radioactive waste from a defunct nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, storing it there would cost billions more over the centuries — and risk contamination of Lake Erie. That was the conclusion of a state-funded report on the 3,300-acre West Valley nuclear site, closed since the early 1970s and once the nation's only commercial center for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. Released Tuesday, the report comes during a growing national debate about stepping up nuclear power as a way to cut the greenhouse gases that cause global warming. Critics continue to question the fate of spent fuel, which is dangerous for thousands of years.

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=746108&category=REGION>

Report available at <http://www.chej.org/>

December 3, 2008

**Munger: Countdown to closure for DOE's incinerator, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

The Department of Energy plans to burn more than 2 million pounds of toxic waste over the next year and then shut down its Oak Ridge incinerator. At least that's the plan. As many folks may remember, DOE has extended the life of the incinerator multiple times in the past. So there remains some uncertainty about things. "The plan is still to shut down operations at the end of this current fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2009)," DOE spokesman John Shewairy said this week. According to the Oak Ridge burn plan, which was approved by environmental regulators in 2007, the waste load for the final year includes about 210,000 pounds of solid waste and about 1.9 million pounds of liquid waste.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/dec/03/munger-countdown-closure-does-incinerator/>

December 1, 2008

**First glove boxes removed from Hanford's 300 Area, *Tri-City Herald***

HANFORD -- The first contaminated glove boxes have been removed from Hanford's 300 Area just north of Richland as cleanup progresses there to more hazardous buildings. "We start with lower risk and move to higher risk," said Bob Smith, Washington Closure Hanford director of decontamination and demolition. Hanford workers so far have brought down 79 of 210 buildings in the area just north of Richland, according to the Department of Energy. They were used during World War II and the Cold War for research and manufacturing fuel to be irradiated to produce plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/12467.html>