

## News from Around the Complex

*January 1 – January 31, 2009*

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

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January 30, 2009

### **Warning Sounded as France Moves Ahead on Reactor, *New York Times***

BRUSSELS — As France presses ahead with building more next-generation nuclear reactors, new evidence emerged Friday to suggest that industry and governments might be unprepared to handle the increasingly toxic waste that will result.

\*\*\*Areva, the Paris company that designed the so-called EPR, says the system will generate far more electricity more safely than previous reactors, is easier to build and will last longer.\*\*\*But an antinuclear group, Greenpeace, said that information it had gleaned from industry reports — which are public but have received little attention so far — showed that waste from the EPR would be more radioactive by a factor of seven. That will make it more expensive to handle and to store safely, according to Greenpeace, which provided the details to The International Herald Tribune.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/31/business/worldbusiness/31nuclear.html?ref=business>

January 30, 2009

### **Yucca funding likely to shrink further, *Pahrump Valley Times***

WASHINGTON -- The already scaled-back federal funding to bury nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain -- would drop by close to \$100 million more through the rest of fiscal 2009, continuing a steep downward spiral that raises new questions about the future of the project. The office of Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., disclosed new spending cuts Wednesday for the unpopular Nevada project that he once vowed to make "bleed real hard," and that he says he is trying to end altogether. The annual spending level of \$288.3 million would be a record low, or close to it, for 26-year nuclear project, Energy Department managers said. "That's pretty much near the bottom," spokesman Allen Benson said. Benson said DOE would not comment on project spending until it was made final.

<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2009/Jan-30-Fri-2009/news/26618226.html>

January 29, 2009

### **Federal government responds in Hanford lawsuit, *Tri-City Herald***

The Department of Justice's initial response to the state of Washington's lawsuit against the Department of Energy over Hanford cleanup says the federal government cannot be held liable for deadlines that have not been missed. The state filed a lawsuit against DOE in late November after DOE missed some cleanup deadlines and acknowledged it was unlikely to meet other deadlines in the legally binding Tri-Party Agreement. The Department of Justice response also questions whether the state had authority over some of the issues it raised, pointing out for example that radioactive materials are governed by the federal Atomic Energy Act.

<http://www.hanfordnews.com/news/2008/story/12760.html>

January 28, 2009

### **Spent Nuclear Fuel: A Trash Heap Deadly for 250,000 Years or a Renewable Energy Source?, *Scientific American***

A 98-foot-wide, two-mile-long ditch with steep walls 33 feet deep that bristles with magnets and radar reflectors will stand for millennia as a warning to future humans

not to trifle with what is hidden inside the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP) outside Carlsbad, N.M. Paired with 48 stone or concrete 105-ton markers, etched with warnings in seven languages ranging from English to Navajo as well as human faces contorted into expressions of horror, the massive installation is meant to stand for at least 10,000 years—twice as long as the Egyptian pyramids have survived. But the plutonium ensconced in the salt mine at the center of this installation will be lethal to humans for at least 25 times that long—even once the salt walls ooze inward to entomb the legacy of American atomic weapons.

<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=nuclear-waste-lethal-trash-or-renewable-energy-source>

January 26, 2009

**Deep Geologic Repository for Low and Intermediate Level Radioactive Wastes: Final Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines and Joint Review Panel Agreement Issued**, *Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission Press Release*

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency) and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) issued two documents today – the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Guidelines and the Joint Review Panel (JRP) Agreement – related to Ontario Power Generation’s (OPG) proposed Deep Geologic Repository project, located in the Municipality of Kincardine, Ontario. The EIS Guidelines identify the information needed for OPG to prepare the EIS which will provide a detailed analysis of the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The EIS Guidelines also list the requirements for a license to prepare the site and construct the Deep Geologic Repository.

[http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/eng/mediacentre/releases/news\\_release.cfm?news\\_release\\_id=331](http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/eng/mediacentre/releases/news_release.cfm?news_release_id=331)

EIS Guidelines available here:

[http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/pubs\\_catalogue/uploads/eis\\_guidelines\\_dgr\\_jan\\_09\\_en.pdf](http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/pubs_catalogue/uploads/eis_guidelines_dgr_jan_09_en.pdf)

Joint Review Panel agreement available here:

[http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/pubs\\_catalogue/uploads/jpr\\_agreement\\_dgr\\_jan\\_09\\_en.pdf](http://www.nuclearsafety.gc.ca/pubs_catalogue/uploads/jpr_agreement_dgr_jan_09_en.pdf)

January 25, 2009

**Selling out Nevada: Gibbons plans to cut fight against Yucca Mountain, and some in GOP want blood money**, *Las Vegas Sun*

[Editorial] Since the federal government announced plans to turn Yucca Mountain into a nuclear waste dump, Nevada’s governors have been unified in their opposition. The state’s vigorous fight has exposed the plan’s serious and dangerous flaws, and Nevada is in a position to defeat the plan once and for all. Enter Gov. Jim Gibbons. His proposed budget guts the state’s Agency for Nuclear Projects, which is responsible for pressing Nevada’s case. He cut the staff from seven to two. He also slashed funding for the state’s legal challenges. The attorney general, for example, asked for \$5 million over two years and was granted just \$186,000 by Gibbons.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2009/jan/25/selling-out-nevada/>

January 24, 2009

**More spent fuel is coming**, *Augusta Chronicle*

Savannah River Site has been cleared to accept an additional 1.1 metric tons of spent nuclear reactor fuel from foreign research reactors under a program designed to prevent such material from falling into the hands of terrorists. The material -- containing enriched uranium -- would come from reactors in more than a dozen nations and could be shipped to SRS by rail or truck after being offloaded from ships

at the Charleston, S.C., Naval Weapons Station, according to a notice published Friday in the Federal Register. Research reactors are smaller facilities typically operated by universities or scientific research centers, said Jim Giusti, a U.S. Energy Department spokesman.

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/24/met\\_508957.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/24/met_508957.shtml)

January 22, 2009

**Auditors uncover trouble in books, *Augusta Chronicle***

Federal auditors Wednesday highlighted a series of accounting deficiencies with Savannah River Site's former management contractor and laid part of the blame on U.S. Department of Energy managers who were supposed to help monitor the company. "Until these deficiencies are corrected, we are unable to assess the allowability and allocability of the over \$1.4 billion in costs incurred and claimed by Washington Savannah River Company," said a report prepared by the Energy Department's Office of Inspector General. The audit report, which covered fiscal 2007, said that WSRC was required to conduct internal audits "to ensure that costs charged were allowable." As a safeguard, federal managers at Savannah River Operations Office were supposed to exercise oversight of such audits by ensuring that auditors reported to an independent committee to prevent the auditors from "modifying results in favor of WSRC."

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/22/met\\_508611.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/22/met_508611.shtml)

Full report available here: <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0811.pdf>

January 21, 2009

**Earliest weapons-grade plutonium found in US dump, *New Scientist***

An old glass jar inside a beaten up old safe at the bottom of a waste pit may seem an unlikely place to find a pivotal piece of 20th century history. But that's just where the first batch of weapons-grade plutonium ever made has been found - abandoned at the world's oldest nuclear processing site. The potentially dangerous find was made at Hanford, Washington State, the site of a nuclear reservation, established in 1943 to support the US's pioneering nuclear weapons program. Hanford made the plutonium-239 for Trinity, the first ever nuclear weapon test, on 16 July 1945. Just three-and-a-half weeks later, more Hanford plutonium was used in the nuclear strike on the Japanese city of Nagasaki. But sloppy work by the contractors running the site saw all kinds of chemical and radioactive waste indiscriminately buried in pits underground over the 40 years Hanford was operational, earning it the accolade of the dirtiest place on Earth.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn16447-earliest-weaponsgrade-plutonium-found-in-us-dump.html>

January 20, 2009

**Chu confirmed as energy secretary, *Platts Energy Services***

The US Senate confirmed Steven Chu as energy secretary in a voice vote January 20, nearly four hours after Barack Obama was sworn in as the country's 44th president. Chu, a Nobel Prize winner and former director of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, was among seven nominees the Senate confirmed together. Chu sailed through his confirmation hearing January 13, during which he emphasized the importance of producing electricity without producing greenhouse gases. Chu told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that nuclear power accounts for roughly 70% of the emission-free electricity produced in the US. He said the nuclear waste issue should not deter the construction of new reactors.

<http://www.platts.com/Nuclear/News/7618103.xml?p=Nuclear/News&sub=Nuclear>

January 20, 2009

**Senators lobby for billions to accelerate Hanford cleanup: Stimulus fund dollars would boost local economies, clear land for development, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer***

RICHLAND -- Miles of tainted groundwater. Dozens of burial sites, silently brimming with dangerous radioactive waste. Weapons-grade plutonium still to be shipped off the nation's most contaminated nuclear site. The Hanford Nuclear Reservation in southeast Washington presents no shortage of work toward cleaning up the site, work that is expected to continue for decades, but managers say they will miss 23 deadlines this year because budgeted funds were insufficient. That's one reason senators whose districts include Department of Energy sites such as Hanford are pushing for stimulus money to rejuvenate local economies with cleanup work and, they hope, provide freshly scrubbed land for industrial development.

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/396729\\_cleanup20.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/396729_cleanup20.html)

January 19, 2009

**Transport plan puts Yucca back to 2020, *World Nuclear News***

Plans to transport used nuclear fuel to Yucca Mountain repository would not be enacted before 2020, according to a new filing by the US Department of Energy (DOE). As part of its obligations under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, the DOE is responsible for developing and implementing a system to transport US used nuclear fuel and high-level waste (HLW) from where the material is generated or stored to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. The facility was supposed to be complete by 1998, but a multitude of delays have put the earliest operating date at 2017. Now the proposed start of transport to the site in 2020 indicates storage operations would be further delayed.

<http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=24418>

January 17, 2009

**Work begins on waste facility, *Augusta Chronicle***

Ground was broken Friday for a \$345 million waste solidification building that will process liquid waste from a larger mixed oxide fuel facility designed to convert weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel. The new building will occupy about nine acres and is the second building in the plutonium disposition complex being constructed in the site's F Area. The MOX facility has been under construction since August 2007. The waste solidification facility will process low-level and liquid waste streams from that plant and related programs. "This begins the second step in safely disposing of our legacy plutonium," said Chuck Munns, the president and CEO of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the site's managing contractor. "This is a relatively small facility by design, but it's essential to the successful operation of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility and pit disassembly operations."

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/17/met\\_507993.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/17/met_507993.shtml)

January 14, 2009

**Texas Approves Nation's Largest Low-Level Radioactive Waste Site, *Environment News Service***

AUSTIN, Texas, January 14, 2009 (ENS) - The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, voted 2-0 Tuesday to grant a double license for Waste Control Specialists to dispose of up to 28 million cubic feet of low-level radioactive waste from Texas, Vermont and the federal government in Andrews County. Commissioner Larry Soward abstained from the vote. The site is located in west Texas near the New Mexico border. The commission also denied the request by the Lone Star Chapter of

the Sierra Club on behalf of its Eunice, New Mexico members for a contested case hearing before an administrative law judge to decide the merits of the license. "The agency and commissioners by their action are approving the nation's largest commercial radioactive waste site when basic facts about the site are still inadequately understood," said Dr. Cyrus Reed, conservation director of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club. "They had nothing to lose, and everything to gain by granting us the opportunity to prove in court that the site is inadequate and potentially dangerous."

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jan2009/2009-01-14-093.asp>

January 14, 2009

**Murray proposes billions in federal funds for nuclear site cleanup, *Tri-City Herald***

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., is proposing that \$6 billion to \$7 billion be included in a national economic recovery package for cleanup work at Hanford and other Department of Energy nuclear sites. That's in line with a proposal that's outlined in a DOE report that covers one option for the Obama administration to consider. The DOE proposal calls for \$6 billion to be spent to significantly reduce the size of large contaminated sites such as Hanford and finish cleanup at smaller sites. The proposal also calls for DOE cleanup sites to be developed into energy parks. "To make progress ... we need to put in enough funds to reduce the size of the sites," Murray said Tuesday during a Senate Budget Committee confirmation hearing for Peter Orszag, nominated for director of the Office of Management and Budget.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/444186.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/444186.html)

January 14, 2009

**Salt waste plant can be finished, *Augusta Chronicle***

The U.S. Department of Energy gave a final go-ahead Tuesday to initiate the long-delayed full construction phase of Savannah River Site's \$1.34 billion Salt Waste Processing Facility. The 146,000-square-foot facility should go into operation in three to four years, according to department officials. The project was originally scheduled to be completed this year, but it was delayed and reworked over concerns about its design and vulnerability to seismic activity. Parsons Infrastructure & Technology Group Inc. was selected in 2004 to design, construct, start up and operate the facility for one year. At its peak, the project will employ more than 400 construction and support personnel. Of the 36 million gallons of radioactive Cold War nuclear waste in SRS tanks, 33 million gallons are liquid and salt cake suitable to enter the facility, which will separate high-activity radionuclides from low-activity salt waste. After separation, the high-activity salt waste will be encapsulated in glass at the Defense Waste Processing Facility and stored nearby until disposal in a geologic repository.

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/14/met\\_507595.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/14/met_507595.shtml)

January 14, 2009

**DOE plan would boost cleanup, benefit OR: If proposal gets federal funds, hundreds of workers could be hired, *Knoxville News-Sentinel***

OAK RIDGE - Oak Ridge contractors could be hiring hundreds of additional cleanup workers if a Department of Energy proposal is funded as part of the government's economic stimulus package. DOE is pushing a plan that would accelerate cleanup action at sites around the country, including Oak Ridge, and reportedly create as many as 10,000 jobs if the government is willing to invest about \$6 billion over the next four years. "I just think it would be great for Oak Ridge," said Jenny Freeman of the Energy, Technology and Environmental Business Association, whose members

include most of the companies involved in DOE-sponsored cleanup program. DOE emphasized that nothing is certain at this point, including Oak Ridge's share of the proposed funding package, but agency spokesman John Shewairy said a plan is in place to move quickly if there's an infusion of federal money.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/jan/14/doe-plan-would-boost-cleanup-benefit-or/>

January 14, 2009

**Gordon, Alexander introduce waste ban legislation, *The Tennessean***

WASHINGTON -- Democratic Rep. Bart Gordon and Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander introduced legislation Wednesday that would ban the importation of low-level nuclear waste. The legislation was prompted by a request last year by EnergySolutions to import 20,000 tons of waste from Italy to be processed near Oak Ridge, Tenn. and stored in Utah. That request has been pending before the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission while a legal fight between the company and state officials in Utah continues. "The United States is the only country in the world that imports the radioactive waste of other countries and disposes of it," Gordon said in a news release. "If a country is going to build nuclear plants, it has a responsibility to also build disposal sites."

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/D4/20090114/NEWS01/90114029>

January 14, 2009

**Chu calls nuclear waste 'thorny' issue, *Las Vegas Review-Journal***

WASHINGTON -- Steven Chu said Tuesday that as energy secretary he will pursue the "best possible scientific analysis" to chart the disposal of the nation's nuclear waste, without saying what he plans to do about the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. Appearing at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Chu was asked how he plans to approach nuclear waste management, where the government's preferred disposal site in Nevada is more than 10 years behind schedule. Nuclear waste poses "very thorny questions," Chu said, noting that President-elect Barack Obama has stated "very clearly" his opposition to the repository, where the Energy Department is seeking a license to build disposal tunnels for more than 77,000 tons of radioactive material.

<http://www.lvrj.com/news/37559999.html>

January 13, 2009

**High-risk Hanford burial ground cleaned up, *Tri-City Herald***

Hanford workers have finished cleaning up a high risk burial ground a mile north of Richland and even closer to the Columbia River. Over the last year they've dug up and hauled away almost 179,000 tons of dirt and debris, some of it contaminated with chemicals or radionuclides, from the 618-7 Burial Ground. Washington Closure Hanford, the Department of Energy contractor assigned the work, researched historical records to try to figure out what might have been disposed of in the burial ground from 1960 to 1973. But with records sketchy, Washington Closure had to be ready for the unexpected. It did that well, said DOE and the Environmental Protection Agency, a Hanford regulator.

[http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick\\_pasco\\_richland/story/443012.html](http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/443012.html)

January 12, 2009

**DOE plan could bring thousands of jobs, *Aiken Standard***

An additional investment of \$6 billion over the next four years at SRS and other DOE cleanup sites could mean 10,000 new jobs. As part of President-elect Barack Obama's stimulus plan, billions of dollars could be funneled into the Department of

Energy's cleanup program with a view to significantly accelerate the remaining work, according to an internal DOE document. "These footprint reduction efforts will lower monitoring and maintenance costs enabling (the office of Environmental Management) to focus on critical long-term activities like managing highly radioactive liquid tank waste," documents state. "They will also enable the leveraging of DOE/EM site assets to address national energy and environmental goals through the Energy Parks Initiatives." These plans are in the very early stages, but documents outline a plan that should be put in place rapidly once the new secretary is confirmed. At the Savannah River Site, cleanup on the reactors and industrial areas would be accelerated resulting in up to a 90 percent footprint of the site. This would free up 200 square miles of the site from the tight security cordon, according to the papers. The reduction of the footprints of sites at Hanford in Washington, Idaho and Oak Ridge in Tennessee would be tackled in the same way.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/local/0113SRInvestment>

January 8, 2009

**EPA demands resumption of toxics cleanup at Livermore lab, *Contra Costa Times***

To prevent further spread of contaminated groundwater on and around Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, the federal government on Wednesday ordered the lab to immediately resume its Superfund cleanup activities. The Environmental Protection Agency is also seeking fines of \$105,000, stating there were cleanup violations between February and September, and continuing fines of \$10,000 per week, retroactive to Oct. 1. Laboratory spokesman John Belluardo, however, described the fines as "unjustified" and said the Department of Energy, which runs the lab, plans to appeal. Last February, the DOE began shutting down the lab's state-of-the-art cleanup system due to budget cuts. It also laid off 60 percent of the staff running it.

[http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci\\_11401969](http://www.contracostatimes.com/ci_11401969)

January 5, 2009

**Government Transparency Takes a Hit: Agencies' midnight rule changes may make it harder for FOIA requestors to get information, *Columbia Journalism Review***

[Opinion] As one of the most secretive presidential administrations in history gets ready to close up shop, it's closing a few more things—records. Over the past few months, some federal agencies have issued rules that would eliminate public disclosure of information—or, in some cases, make it more difficult for requestors to get information. While the federal Freedom of Information Act regulates what government information may be withheld from the public, internal rules determine how that law is carried out at the agency level. Those rules also may restrict access to information. On December 9, the Department of Energy proposed a rule that would eliminate the agency's "public interest balancing test" in determining whether to release information to the public. That test allowed the agency to release documents that would otherwise be exempt from disclosure if, in their opinion, releasing them would serve the public interest. According to the agency's summary of the rule, the test imposed "an additional burden on DOE."

[http://www.cjr.org/campaign\\_desk/government\\_transparency\\_takes.php](http://www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/government_transparency_takes.php)

Federal Register notice:

<http://www.setonresourcecenter.com/register/2008/dec/09/74658A.pdf>

January 2, 2009

**SRS plans fewer job cuts: Contract decisions to come, *Augusta Chronicle***

Savannah River Site can expect a new operating budget, fewer employees and the resolution of a disputed \$3.3 billion operating contract during the coming year. Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Energy selected Savannah River Remediation LLC to manage the site's extensive liquid waste program, which includes the disposal of 35 million gallons of Cold War nuclear waste. A rival bidder, Savannah River Tank Closure LLC, notified the Government Accountability Office on Dec. 22 that it would protest the award, said DOE spokesman Jim Giusti. "It could be early May before that protest is resolved by GAO." Savannah River Remediation is led by URS Washington Division. Its rival, Savannah River Tank Closure, is led by Parsons Corp. The contract period for the winning group will run from April 1 through March 31, 2015.

[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/02/met\\_506185.shtml](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2009/01/02/met_506185.shtml)