

News from Around the Complex

September 1 – September 30, 2008

September 30, 2008

EPA issues final Yucca Mountain radiation rules, *Las Vegas Sun*

The federal Environmental Protection Agency today issued final rules for limiting radiation standards from a proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The new rules satisfy a July 2004 court decision to extend the standards to protect public health and the environment, the EPA said. The Yucca Mountain standards are in line with international radioactive waste management approaches, although Yucca Mountain is the only site designated as a final repository for both spent nuclear fuel and Defense Department nuclear wastes from the Cold War. The EPA said it retained the dose limit of 15 millirem per year for the first 10,000 years after nuclear waste is disposed. The agency established a dose limit of 100 millirem for annual exposure per year between 10,000 years and 1 million years.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/sep/30/epa-issues-final-yucca-mountain-radiation-rules/>

September 29, 2008

Head of Nevada Nuclear Projects office resigns, *Las Vegas Sun*

The executive director of the Nevada Commission on Nuclear Projects has resigned amid questions over whether he illegally gave pay raises to himself and others in his office. Bob Loux stepped down Monday at a meeting of the state agency fighting federal plans for a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain. Loux says working at the office had been his "life's work" for 32 years, and he does not want the controversy over pay raises to distract the agency from fighting the dump. Commissioners are asking Loux to stay on until a replacement is named. Loux's replacement will be appointed by Gov. Jim Gibbons, who had pressured him to resign.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/sep/29/head-of-nevada-nuclear-projects-office-resigns/>

September 27, 2008

Bill with additional Hanford funds dies, *Tri-City Herald*

Work at the Hanford nuclear reservation is expected to be paid for until spring at current funding levels because Congress has not passed a Department of Energy budget for the fiscal year starting Wednesday. The Senate could pass a continuing resolution today to allow DOE to continue spending money. Friday, a separate Senate supplemental appropriations bill that could have boosted Hanford spending in the waning days of fiscal 2008 by an estimated \$160 million to \$170 million failed to make it to a vote. For the Senate to consider the bill, supporters needed 60 votes on a motion to proceed to consideration of the bill but received only 52. The bill, which included \$56 billion of spending, had been proposed to stimulate the economy.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/329983.html

September 26, 2008

Action Needed to Improve Accountability and Management of DOE's Major Cleanup Projects, *GAO Report*

The Department of Energy (DOE) spends billions of dollars annually to clean up nuclear wastes at sites that produced nuclear weapons. Cleanup projects decontaminate and demolish buildings, remove and dispose of contaminated soil,

treat contaminated groundwater, and stabilize and dispose of solid and liquid radioactive wastes. Ten of these projects meet or nearly meet DOE's definition of major: costs exceeding \$1 billion in the near term--usually a 5-year window of the project's total estimated life cycle. GAO was asked to determine the (1) extent to which the cost and schedule for DOE's major cleanup projects have changed and key reasons for changes, and (2) factors that may hinder DOE's ability to effectively manage these projects. GAO met with project directors and reviewed project documents for 10 major cleanup projects: 9 above the near-term \$1 billion threshold, and 1 estimated to cost between \$900 million and \$1 billion over the near term.

Full report available at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081081.pdf>

September 26, 2008

Nuclear waste piles up at hospitals, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

BARNWELL, S.C. -- Tubes, capsules and pellets of used radioactive material are piling up in the basements and locked closets of hospitals and research installations around the country, stoking fears they could get lost or, worse, stolen by terrorists and turned into dirty bombs. For years, truckloads of low-level nuclear waste from most of the U.S. were taken to a rural South Carolina landfill. There, items such as the rice-size radioactive seeds for treating cancer and pencil-thin nuclear tubes used in industrial gauges were sealed in concrete and buried. But a South Carolina law that took effect July 1 ended nearly all disposal of radioactive material at the landfill, leaving 36 states with no place to throw out some of the stuff. So labs, universities, hospitals and manufacturers are storing more and more of it on their own property. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08270/915309-84.stm>

September 25, 2008

Matheson writes letter opposing Italian waste in Utah: He and a Tennessee representative say there is no place to store the radioactive waste, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

WASHINGTON - Two congressmen argue in a letter sent Wednesday that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission lacks power to grant a license for Salt Lake City-based EnergySolutions to import 20,000 tons of Italian low-level radioactive waste into the United States. Saying they understand a decision may be granted soon on EnergySolutions' request, Reps. Jim Matheson, D-Utah, and Bart Gordon, D-Tenn., ask the NRC to reject the application to bring the waste to American shores because there is no site to store it. "The NRC has no authority to import waste when there is not a facility to ultimately dispose of it," Matheson and Gordon wrote.

EnergySolutions is seeking to bring the waste from Italy to Tennessee to process and then bury about 1,600 leftover tons of waste in the company's disposal site in Utah's west desert. But Utah officials have balked at the plan, and the Northwest Interstate Compact, a congressionally sanctioned entity that controls the flow of radioactive waste in its region, opposes the move as well.

http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_10554135

September 25, 2008

Waving 'bye to waste: Highly hazardous radioactive material is on its way from Oak Ridge to New Mexico, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Workers applauded Wednesday morning as a truck loaded with three huge containers of radioactive waste left their Oak Ridge plant headed to New Mexico. It marked the first shipment of transuranic waste - a long-lived, extremely hazardous form of radioactive waste - to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M. Gerald Boyd, the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge manager, called

it an important milestone as the agency works to safely dispose of waste legacies, some of which date to the World War II Manhattan Project. The radioactive trash is a byproduct of reactor operations at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/sep/25/waving-bye-to-waste/>

September 24, 2008

Hanford begins waste retrieval, *Tri-City Herald*

HANFORD -- Hanford workers began retrieving radioactive and hazardous chemical waste from Tank C-110 this week. They're hoping it marks the first sustained effort to retrieve solid waste from leak-prone underground tanks since late July 2007 when a spill of waste stopped operations. It also ends CH2M Hill Hanford Group's efforts at the tank farms on a positive note. New contractor Washington River Protection Solutions takes over operations of Hanford's tank farms Oct. 1 under a \$7.1 billion contract. CH2M Hill has completed removing waste from seven Hanford tanks and has done some work to retrieve solid wastes from four more, including Tank C-110. It also removed pumpable liquid from all 149 of Hanford's leak-prone single shell tanks. Waste left from the past production of plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons programs is being pumped from single-shell tanks into 28 sturdier double shell tanks to await treatment and disposal.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/326251.html

September 20, 2008

Bechtel gets \$9.7B to run Knolls: Company will take over management of Niskayuna atomic power lab from Lockheed Martin, *Times-Union (Albany)*

NISKAYUNA -- In a move that was not unexpected, Bechtel has been awarded a contract by the Department of Energy to manage the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory in Niskayuna. Bechtel subsidiary Bechtel Marine Propulsion won the \$9.7 billion contract, which also includes management of the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory outside Pittsburgh. The current manager of the Knolls lab is Lockheed Martin. There are 2,600 employees between the lab's main facility in Niskayuna and another facility in West Milton. Knolls designs nuclear reactors for submarines. Federal officials said last spring they wanted to merge the management of Knolls and Bettis in an effort to save \$4.5 million a year. Bechtel already manages Bettis.

<http://timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=722362&category=BUSINESS>

September 19, 2008

DOE to follow state law in lab cleanup, *Ventura County Star*

WASHINGTON — A top official with the U.S. Department of Energy promised Thursday that the federal agency would comply with a new California law during the cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Frank Marcinowski, a deputy assistant secretary in the agency's Office of Environmental Management, also pledged the agency would not stand in the way of a comprehensive investigation of radioactive chemical contamination at the site south of Simi Valley. Marcinowski made his commitments to the Santa Susana project while under questioning by U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, who chairs a committee that held a hearing on cleanup activities at Santa Susana and other toxic waste sites across the country. Environmental groups say the federal government has been sending signals that it did not intend to comply with the California law, which mandates the complete chemical and radioactive cleanup of the laboratory site.

<http://www.venturacountystar.com/news/2008/sep/19/doe-to-follow-state-law-in-lab-cleanup/>

September 18, 2008

Cleaning up ORNL & Y-12, Knoxville News-Sentinel

Steve McCracken, DOE's environmental manager in Oak Ridge, said the dispute resolution recently achieved by DOE, EPA and the Tennessee Dept. of Environment and Conservation will ultimately make the cleanup program better in Oak Ridge. In fact, the new agreement should cover all of the cleanup projects in Oak Ridge, he said. "We all know that the current accelerated closure plan does not include all the scope that is necessary to clean up the Oak Ridge reservation," McCracken said. "So what we're going to do is begin a process soon to see what the expanded scope is and try to prioritize that and put that into an Appendix J (milestone)." Appendix J is the planning part of the cleanup agreement that allows the parties to see what's coming but is not yet in the enforceable part of the program, the DOE official said. http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/munger/2008/09/cleaning_up_ornl_y12.html

September 17, 2008

Tri-Party litigation would hurt Hanford cleanup, Tri-City Herald

Hanford cleanup and the economy of the Tri-City area will suffer if negotiations over the Tri-Party Agreement fail, warned the Tri-City Development Council and the Hanford Communities. "We are extremely concerned about the very real risks and fallout that will result if agreement is not reached and litigation in some form becomes the foremost consideration," wrote the two agencies in a letter this week to Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire and Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman. The letter urged the state and the federal government, particularly the Department of Justice, to go to extra lengths to resolve differences in negotiations.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/319417.html

September 15, 2008

DOE to temporarily close waste processing center, Tri-City Herald

The Department of Energy plans to shut down Hanford's Waste Receiving and Processing Facility early in 2009 for an undetermined length of time. The temporary shutdown is part of a plan announced by DOE in March to start sending some Hanford waste to the Idaho National Laboratory for processing and then shipment for disposal at a national repository in New Mexico. About 1,000 drums of radioactive Hanford waste that would otherwise be processed at Hanford will be sent to Idaho in an initial campaign. DOE plans call for about 9,000 of the drums eventually to be sent to Idaho. About 40 people at the Waste Receiving and Processing Facility, or WRAP, would be affected, according to DOE. But because the work will be paid for out of the Hanford budget, sending the shipments to Idaho will not mean a decrease in Hanford jobs next year, said Dave Brockman, manager of the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office.

http://www.tri-cityherald.com/kennewick_pasco_richland/story/317138.html

September 13, 2008

S.C. needs national site to store nuclear waste, The Greenville News (South Carolina)

[Editorial] Nuclear waste continues to pile up at reactors across the United States and here in South Carolina. At the Oconee Nuclear Station, the pools for spent nuclear fuel rods are full. Space can continue to be added to dry storage in Oconee, but that space is intended for less radioactive waste. The problem in Oconee is a familiar one across the nation. More than 60,000 metric tons of spent fuel are being stored at 121 locations, mostly nuclear reactors, in 39 states. The nation needs a national high-level repository for nuclear waste. After years of delays, the U.S. Energy Department recently submitted an application to store nuclear waste underground at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. The site is at least a dozen years from

opening, but the 8,600-page license application offers hope that South Carolina and other states eventually may have a place to deposit their growing nuclear waste stockpile.

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080913/OPINION/809130303/1004/NEWS01>

September 12, 2008

Hanford workers beat waste deadline, *Tri-City Herald*

The Department of Energy and Fluor Hanford have dug up enough temporarily buried radioactive waste to fill 46,600 drums, easily beating a Dec. 31 deadline at the Hanford nuclear reservation. This is the fifth year in a row that workers have beat deadlines to retrieve portions of the waste, even though work has become more difficult. "This project has been very challenging, with difficult field conditions due to heat and wind and degraded waste containers," said Dale McKenney, a Fluor Hanford vice president. To keep the project moving at a steady pace this summer, Fluor Hanford moved to nighttime shifts to beat the heat for work that required staff to wear respirators and layers of protective clothing. It also retrieved some large boxes of waste, boosting the total amount of waste retrieved.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/915/story/314526.html>

September 10, 2008

HANFORD: No accord reached on Tri-Party agreement, *Tri-City Herald*

Washington, D.C. Another round of high-level negotiations on revising the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement was held this week in Washington, D.C., with no settlement reached yet. Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire and Attorney General Rob McKenna met with Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman in Washington, D.C., on Monday. Also at the meeting was Jay Manning, director of the Washington State Department of Ecology, and federal and state attorneys. "We're still in discussions," Mary Sue Wilson, senior assistant attorney general, said Wednesday. "We had conversation about core issues." The Department of Energy and state now plan an exchange of proposed settlement language, she said.

<http://www.tri-cityherald.com/1406/story/312770.html>

September 10, 2008

New Y-12 storage site nearly complete: Uranium facility seen as key component of plant's modernization, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - Officials confirmed Tuesday that most construction has been completed at the government's new storage complex for bomb-grade uranium, allowing installation and testing of key systems to begin at the high-security site. The \$549 million fortress - known officially as the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility - is considered an essential part of modernization at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant. It will provide a top-security home for thousands of containers of uranium, which will be loaded onto specially designed storage racks. The actual inventory of uranium kept at Y-12 is classified information. Construction of the reinforced concrete structure on Y-12's west end began in 2004. The price tag for the facility more than doubled in recent years, in large part because of changing designs to meet new security requirements to counter possible terrorist threats.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/sep/10/new-y-12-storage-site-nearly-complete/>

September 7, 2008

SRS ships last batch of legacy solvents out of S.C., *Aiken Standard*

With the last shipment leaving the Savannah River Site (SRS), all legacy solvents from canyon operations have left South Carolina for necessary treatment before final disposition, according to an announcement Friday. When F-Canyon shut down for the last time in 2003, clearing out its systems of all legacy chemicals was a major task. This included uranium-bearing materials, plutonium-bearing materials and 50,000 gallons of PUREX solvents. PUREX (Plutonium and Uranium Extraction) was the chemical process used.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/0908Solvent>

September 5, 2008

At a nuclear waste industry meeting, officials say the regional compact needs revamp, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

LAS VEGAS - Utah has long been the safety valve for states without disposal for radiation-tainted waste. Railroad cars hauled all but 5 percent of the nation's low-level radioactive waste last year to the EnergySolutions Inc. disposal site in Tooele County. But hospitals, universities and nuclear plants that generate low-level waste are beginning to worry about the long-term outlook for a small fraction of the waste they generate, material that has been outlawed in Utah because it is too radiologically hot. Although Congress set up a regional system to deal with this sort of waste two decades ago, many say it doesn't work. But representatives of some key states and regions said Thursday they don't want this "regional compact" system scrapped. They want it revitalized. Otherwise, said Leonard Slosky, the states that have low-level disposal sites are likely to close down for everyone - even the 14 states, like Utah, with access to full-service disposal sites in South Carolina and Washington State.

http://www.sltrib.com/ci_10387608

September 5, 2008

Nuclear accidents buried beneath 76 acres, *Augusta Chronicle*

They were among the worst nuclear accidents in history -- and also the most sensitive. On Jan. 17, 1966, the unthinkable occurred 30,000 feet above the Spanish coastline when an Air Force bomber -- carrying four hydrogen bombs -- broke apart and exploded during a routine, midair refueling. As the B-52 disintegrated, its fully armed weapons hurtled toward earth. One fell into the sea and another bounced into a field, where it was recovered intact. The remaining two bombs exploded, although safety devices prevented the primary nuclear fuses from full detonation. Nonetheless, the "dirty bomb" scattering of plutonium and other radioactive materials created a trail of contamination centered near the Spanish village of Palomares. The resulting cleanup and recovery, according to records from the Washington-based Center for Defense Information, involved thousands of workers who packed up an estimated 1,400 to 1,750 tons of soil, vegetation and debris that was quietly flown to the United States and buried at Savannah River Site.

http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/090508/met_472071.shtml

September 4, 2008

Utah one-stop shop for N-waste: State regulators worry about the growing role of Tooele site, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

LAS VEGAS - When some people refer to Utah as a "national treasure," it's not for the state's picturesque deserts or breathtaking mountains but because of a mile-square disposal site in Tooele County for much of the nation's radioactive waste. Without it, rail cars of low-level radioactive waste would have nowhere to go. That kind of notoriety is making the Utah public and policymakers uneasy, a state regulator said Wednesday. Bill Sinclair, deputy director of Utah's Department of

Environmental Quality, advised an industry group here: "Don't put all of your eggs into one basket." He was talking about Utah's low-level waste disposal site in Tooele County. Sinclair was speaking at a forum sponsored by Exchange Monitor Publications that involves local, state, regional, national and international regulators, as well as businesses that provide cleanup, disposal and treatment of low-level radioactive waste. High-level nuclear waste, like spent nuclear fuel, is not allowed in Utah. And the low-level waste permitted at the EnergySolutions Inc. site comes from 36 states and federal government cleanups.

http://www.sltrib.com/ci_10376460

September 3, 2008

USEC break big for OR, Knoxville News-Sentinel

OAK RIDGE - It's likely the biggest tax break in the city's history, but it still will mean \$500,000 each year in property taxes for Oak Ridge and Anderson County when the company hits peak production. It also will mean \$1 million annually in tax savings for USEC Inc., the company that took over the former Boeing-Oak Ridge facility and is ramping up production of centrifuges for its new uranium enrichment plant in Piketon, Ohio. And for the Oak Ridge Industrial Development Board, the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes - or PILOT - approved Tuesday means a \$200,000 closing fee. Industrial Development Board Chairman Doug Janney said the windfall probably would be used to help launch a speculative industrial building program next to the former K-25 site in west Oak Ridge.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/sep/03/usec-break-big-for-or/>

September 3, 2008

Munger: Oak Ridge cleanup delay may have a positive result, Knoxville News-Sentinel

[Editorial] Environmental cleanup is exhaustive, expensive and, way too often, exasperating. Just ask anybody who's worked on Oak Ridge projects over the past 25 years, whether they were on the compliance end or the enforcement end. Nothing has come easy. ***According to John Owsley of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, a tentative agreement has been reached on the latest dispute involving plans to clean up the federal government's Oak Ridge reservation. The entire reservation is on Superfund's National Priority List. The new agreement will extend the deadline for the U.S. Department of Energy to complete the long-running Oak Ridge cleanup campaign. But it also will set the stage for more cleanup to be accomplished under the framework approved by DOE, the state of Tennessee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/sep/03/munger-oak-ridge-cleanup-delay-may-have-positive-r/>

September 3, 2008

Nuclear Shortcuts Exposed In U.S. Nuclear Fuel Facility, Science Daily

US regulators have ignored expert safety advice in an attempt to cut corners and fast track the completion of a \$4 billion nuclear fuel facility currently under construction near Aiken, South Carolina. The accusation is reported in the September issue of The Chemical Engineer magazine, published by the Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE). Nuclear disarmament treaties have resulted in a large surplus of weapons-grade plutonium. The US government has initiated moves to build and operate a mixed oxide fuel fabrication facility (MOFFF) that will convert recovered plutonium into fuel rods for use in civil nuclear power generation. However, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has 'hushed up' a highly critical assessment of

the plant's engineering by its top independent reviewer according to Adam Duckett, a senior reporter on The Chemical Engineer.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080902110625.htm>