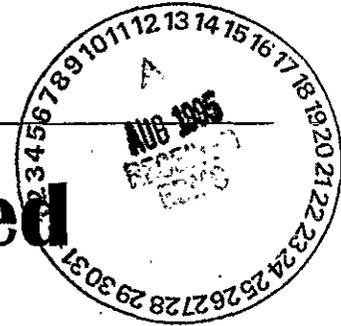




TRI-PARTY FOCUS

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Tank Milestone Removed

Introduction

The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) in 1989 to provide overall direction on clean up of the former Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The three agencies propose to delete all remaining M-42 interim milestones and target dates relating to construction of additional double shell waste storage tanks at this time and to maintain the M-42-00 major milestone with a "to be determined" date should additional tanks be needed in the future.

A 45-day public comment period will start August 8, 1995, on the proposed change to the Tri-Party Agreement. The comment period will end September 21, 1995. No public meetings are scheduled for this TPA change. The draft change may be modified as a result of public comment. Signing of the change will occur after all comments are considered.

Tank Waste Cleanup

Nearly 50 years of nuclear defense material production at Hanford left approximately 55 million gallons of radioactive and chemically hazardous waste in 177 underground storage tanks. The tanks are located in the 200 East or 200 West Areas on Hanford's Central Plateau, about 25 and 28 miles, respectively, northwest of Richland. Sixty-seven of Hanford's 149 single shell tanks have, or are assumed to have leaked, nearly 1 million gallons of waste into nearby soil. Currently, there is approximately 19 million gallons of waste in 28 double shell tanks while single shell tanks hold about 36 million gallons.

Single shell tanks, which were constructed between 1944 and 1964, received waste until 1980. These tanks are buried beneath 6 to 10 feet of earth and range in capacity from 500,000 gallons to 1 million gallons. Waste in the tanks consists of liquids, sludges and saltcake, a mixture of crusty solids and crystallized salts.

The 1989 TPA committed the Hanford cleanup agencies to retrieve and treat the waste in the 28 double-shell tanks and to eventually close the single shell tanks. USDOE has continued a program begun in the 1960s to pump as much liquid as possible from the older single shell tanks into double shell tanks. It also restarted an evaporator operation last year to reduce the volume of liquid waste. USDOE plans to have all pumpable liquid out of single shell tanks by the year 2000 and to remove sludges and other solids and turn them into glass for safer storage by 2028.

Efforts to reduce waste volume in 200 West Area presented Hanford cleanup agencies with a particularly difficult challenge. The area has 83 single shell tanks and only three double shells, two of which are on safety watch lists because of buildups of potentially flammable hydrogen gas. The tank farms' evaporator and 25 other double shell tanks lie more than 5 miles away in the 200 East Area. The TPA requires construction of a new double-casing pipeline to transfer waste between the 200 West and 200 East areas. The line will be used to consolidate all liquid into the 200 East Area by 1998 and to support full scale retrieval of tank waste including sludges by 2018. An existing 43-year-old single casing pipeline would be used on an as needed basis for liquids until the new line is built. The existing line is not capable of continual use or of supporting retrieval.

Proposed Changes to the M-42 Milestone

TPA provisions currently call for additional double-shell tank capacity to be available by the end of 1998. The Tri-Party agencies have restudied the need for new waste tanks and now believe Hanford's tank waste can be safely stored in the site's existing tank capacity until at least October 2003. Study findings determined mixer pumps can help mitigate safety concerns in watch list tanks, and less dilution will be needed as a result. Improved tank utilization, successful waste minimization efforts, a reduction in tank contingency space, and more accurate estimates of single shell tank liquid volume also have reduced the requirements for additional double-shell tank space.

Because of these recent studies, TPA agencies believe a decision on additional tank space can be delayed at least two years when more will be known about the requirements of the waste retrieval, treatment and immobilization programs. The proposed delay does not impact other tank remediation system target dates or milestones and still allows a decision to be made in time to provide additional storage tanks if needed. TPA Milestones M-46-01B through M-46-01Z remain in place, calling for annual evaluations between 1995 and 2019 of double-shell tank space. The evaluation must be followed by a decision to acquire additional tanks if needed.

How You Can Be Involved

Comments on the M-42 proposed milestone changes may be provided to the Washington Department of Ecology during the 45-day comment period which will end September 21, 1995.

Send comments to Robert Harper, Washington Department of Ecology, Nuclear Waste Program, P. O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600.

For More Information

If you would like more information, call Hanford Cleanup toll-free 1-800-321-2008 or:

Roger Stanley, Ecology, at (360) 407-8108
Doug Sherwood, EPA, at (509) 376-9529
Don Wodrich, USDOE, at (509) 376-6550

All documents relating to the draft TPA change are available for review and copying at the Hanford Tri-Party Agreement Public Information Repositories:

University of Washington	Portland State University
Suzzallo Library	Brantford Price-Millar Library
Government Publications Room	934 SW Harrison
Seattle, WA 98195	Portland, OR 97207-1151
(206) 543-4664	(503) 725-3690
ATTN: Eleanor Chase	ATTN: Michael Bowman/Susan Thomas
Gonzaga University	US DOE Public Reading Room
Foley Center	Washington State University, Tri-Cities
E. 502 Boone	100 Sprout Road, Room 130 West
Spokane, WA 99258	Richland, WA 99352
(509) 328-4220 EXT 3844	(509) 376-8583
ATTN: Tim Fuhrman	ATTN: Terri Traub

The Tri-Party Agreement agencies are equal opportunity agencies and do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, disability, age, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disabled veteran's status, Vietnam Era veteran's status, or sexual orientation.

If you have special accommodation needs or require this material in an alternative format, please contact Michelle Davis at (360) 407-7126 (Voice) or (360) 407-6206 (TDD).

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