0075648

Cook, Sylvia V

From: Meyer, Carrie C [Carrie_C_Meyer@RL.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2008 9:18 AM
To: HANFORD-INFO@LISTSERV.WA.GOV
Subject: HANFORD WORKERS COMPLETE KEY REMEDIATION PROJECT, MEET TRI-PARTY AGREEMENT MILESTONE
Importance: High

DOE NEWS

TSD: H-0-18
IN-0146-45
R-0075650

Media Contacts:
Carrie Meyer, DOE-RL (509) 376-2048
Todd Nelson, WCH (509) 372-9097

For Immediate Release:
January 16, 2008

HANFORD WORKERS COMPLETE KEY REMEDIATION PROJECT, MEET TRI-PARTY AGREEMENT MILESTONE

The U.S. Department of Energy and Washington Closure met an important Tri-Party Agreement cleanup milestone for the River Corridor by completing removal, backfill and revegetation of 39 waste sites and burial grounds at Hanford's 100 B/C Area in late December.

More than 600,000 tons of contaminated material and debris have been removed from the site since work began in 2004. The work represented a new phase of cleanup activities at Hanford because it was the first time workers had tackled cleanup of large-scale burial grounds. In addition the B/C Area burial grounds were large and relatively unknown in that few records still existed identifying the materials workers would be exhuming.

"Removing the hazards posed by these burial grounds is a key component in protecting the river," said DOE Assistant Manager for the River Corridor Joe Franco. "We are very pleased that this work has been safely completed, and look forward to more success as we continue working to remove the hazards at other areas."

The unlined disposal areas date back to the early 1940s when construction began on B Reactor, the nation's first full-scale nuclear reactor used to produce plutonium during World War II. Government crews constructed a second reactor, C Reactor, at the site in 1951. B Reactor operated until

1968 and C Reactor was shut down in 1969.

Over the years, the reactors and accompanying support facilities were the source of contaminated and uncontaminated debris, which was buried in sites adjacent to the Columbia River.

"With limited information on the contents of these burial grounds and waste sites, we had to plan for the unexpected," said Dean Strom, WCH lead for the cleanup on the River Corridor Closure Project at B/C Area. "As part of this effort, workers developed some innovative, remote techniques for sorting radioactive waste to limit potential radiation exposure," he said.

In cleaning up the waste sites, workers unearthed and transported 16 highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel fragments; more than a ton of mercury; thousands of feet of piping; containers full of hydraulic oils, carbon tetrachloride and other hazardous liquids; and thousands of tons of assorted laboratory glassware, construction debris and radioactive reactor hardware.

With the exception of the spent nuclear fuel, all debris was transported to Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility for permanent disposal.

The River Corridor Closure Project is managed by Washington Closure Hanford for the U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office. Under subcontract to Washington Closure, Federal Engineers and Constructors did much of the waste site cleanup work.

###

RL-08-0007