



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO, 83403**

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Waste treatment facility passes federal inspection, completes final milestone, begins startup

The Idaho site today initiated the controlled, phased startup of a new waste treatment facility scheduled to begin treating 900,000 gallons of radioactive liquid waste stored in underground tanks at a former Cold War spent nuclear fuel reprocessing facility next month.



An exterior view of the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit

A U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) operational readiness review team (made up of Subject Matter Experts across the country) in early April identified a dozen issues for the cleanup contractor CH2M-WG Idaho, LLC (CWI) to resolve before the 53,000-square-foot Integrated Waste Treatment Unit became operational. The facility is located on the Idaho Site at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center.

"We're happy to have this important, new facility up and running so we can prepare to treat this legacy Cold War waste — and meet a regulatory milestone — before it's safely, permanently disposed. While the review team noted several findings that needed resolution before the facility received its startup authorization to begin processing waste, the group also highlighted some

strengths, including health and safety team support and the extensive knowledge of the facility's operations personnel," said Jim Cooper, DOE Deputy Manager for the Idaho Cleanup Project.

Mark Lindholm, chief operating officer for CWI, said he is pleased with the review outcome and looks forward to starting up the newest waste treatment facility at a DOE site in about a decade.

"Moving from site preparation to startup in five years on a state-of-the-art waste treatment facility such as this one is a true construction achievement," he said. "Everyone associated with this project has been so dedicated to the mission. I want to thank all of those who have put their hearts and souls into this job."

IWTU will use a steam-reforming technology to heat up the liquid waste, essentially drying it, consolidating the solid, granular material, packaging it in stainless steel canisters, and storing the containers in concrete vaults at the site. Ultimately, the treated material will be transported to a national geologic repository for permanent disposal.

Any facility emissions generated during the treatment campaign will be filtered through high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to "scrub" the discharges to ensure compliance with state and federal air quality requirements.

The liquid waste, called "sodium-bearing waste" due to its high sodium content, was generated during the later phases of spent nuclear fuel reprocessing. The INTEC facility reprocessed and recovered more than \$1 billion worth of uranium from the 1950s until 1992, returning the uranium to the U.S. stockpile to be used again in research and government production reactors.



An interior feed skid located within the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit

Treatment of sodium-bearing waste is scheduled to take approximately seven to eight months to complete, in time to meet a December 31, 2012 regulatory milestone outlined in the 1995 Idaho Settlement Agreement between the state of Idaho, DOE, and the U.S. Navy.

Once the three underground storage tanks containing the waste have been emptied, they – like 11 other previously closed waste tanks – will be thoroughly washed, drained and filled with a concrete grout mixture. A fourth tank that was never used will also be grouted. The entire tank farm will be eventually capped.

For more information visit the Idaho Cleanup Project on the Web at
<https://idahocleanupproject.com>

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