



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

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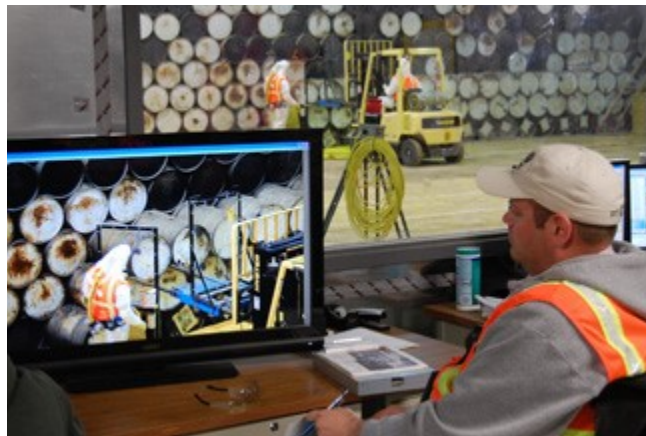
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Retrieval Of Final Stored Radioactive Waste Resumes

IDAHO FALLS, ID- Operations to retrieve the estimated 6,900 cubic meters of stored transuranic waste remaining at the Idaho site began this week at the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project.



Waste retrieval resumes at the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project.

The resumption of work comes after a nearly two-year stoppage of retrieval operations "A significant investment has been made in terms of time and dollars that will allow employees to safely retrieve the final radioactive waste that has been stored aboveground at the Idaho site for more than four decades," said Jim Cooper, Deputy Manager of Environmental Management for DOE's Idaho Operations Office.

The waste, which is stored in the Transuranic Storage Area-Retrieval Enclosure, is the last of some 65,000 cubic meters referenced in the Idaho Settlement Agreement and has been stored in Idaho for nearly 40 years. Metal drums and wooden boxes contain the waste, however, given environmental factors and the period of time the waste has been stored, some containers are losing their structural integrity.

"We have taken a very thoughtful, deliberate approach to resuming retrieval operations," said Richard D. Raaz, president and project manager for the Idaho Treatment Group, which operates

AMWTP for the Department of Energy. “The safety of our employees is the basis for the way we operate at AMWTP. We now have a very robust facility and comprehensive processes to ensure the safety of employees retrieving this final waste.”

Retrieval operations were suspended in July 2010 by former contractor Bechtel BWXT Idaho after two retrieval incidents in which wooden boxes broke. The first incident happened in February 2010 when a box fell apart during retrieval work. The second incident occurred in July 2010, again during the retrieval of a box.

Among the extensive engineered controls that have been put in place to protect workers is the Retrieval Containment Enclosure wall that isolates the remaining waste from the rest of the Transuranic Storage Area-Retrieval Enclosure. Also, an Inner Containment Enclosure was constructed. This enclosure can be maneuvered over high-risk containers, providing additional protection for employees. Robotic equipment is available to minimize employee contact and handling of waste.

“Following our Readiness Assessment, we are confident in ITG’s plans to resume retrieval of this waste and we will be closely monitoring the contractor’s progress,” Cooper said. “This is another important step in the Department’s commitment to meet and, where we can, exceed the milestones contained in the Idaho Settlement Agreement.”

Cooper pointed out that the AMWTP is an important facility in the DOE’s plans to finish the permanent disposal of transuranic waste from other Department sites around the country. When the waste stored in Idaho is disposed per the regulatory requirements, the AMWTP can be used to treat radioactive waste from other sites around the country.

“The Department has made an investment in AMWTP and within the terms of the Idaho Settlement Agreement, we can use this investment to safely treat waste from other sites that can then be disposed at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico,” Cooper said. “It’s an innovative approach meant to save taxpayer’s dollars from building other treatment facilities and with a knowledgeable and experienced workforce, the Department does see a key role for AMWTP in helping the country to safely and permanently dispose its nuclear waste.”

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