

CWI Completes Pit 9 Waste Exhumation

Cleanup crews with CH2M-WG Idaho (CWI), the main cleanup contractor at the Department of Energy's Idaho Site, have completed targeted waste removal from Pit 9 several months ahead of schedule and millions of dollars under budget. About \$12 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act savings from other cleanup projects, in addition to about \$22 million in dedicated funds, were used to finance the Pit 9 project.



A specially modified waste excavator was used to remove transuranic waste from Pit 9.

The completion of Pit 9 brings to a close a remediation project that was first envisioned as a buried waste removal technology demonstration in the 1980s. The remediation project later became a \$179 million fixed-price contract that was mired in cost overruns, technology challenges, missed schedules and eventually a lawsuit that the contractor lost.

In 2004, the south end of the 1-acre pit was chosen for a pilot-scale buried waste removal effort called the Glovebox Excavator Method project. During that demonstration, crews were able to visually identify the exhumed waste and target specific waste forms that may threaten the underlying Snake River Plain Aquifer. That targeted waste retrieval approach became the basis for a 2008 Record of Decision – signed by DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality -- to ship 7,485 cubic meters of targeted waste for offsite disposal from a combined area of 5.69 acres within the Radioactive Waste Management Complex's (RWMC) Subsurface Disposal Area (SDA).

In January 2011, crews completed the construction of a soft-sided building over Pit 9 and began removing plutonium and uranium-contaminated filters, plutonium-contaminated sludges that also contain solvents and oxidized (depleted) uranium. The waste was generated during nuclear weapons production at the Rocky Flats Plant near Denver, Colorado, and was buried in Pit 9 from 1967 to 1969.

"I'm so proud of our crews on this project," said Project Director Hoss Brown. "This was originally envisioned as an 18-month task, and with a lot of hard work and process improvements thought of and implemented by the team, they successfully completed the work in half the time."

The Pit 9 project was the fifth large-scale waste exhumation area at the RWMC since 2005. In addition to Pit 9, wastes have also been removed and packaged from Pits 4, 5 and 6, totaling 2.55 acres, which represents acceleration of more than one year from the contract schedule requirement of Sept. 30, 2012. To date, CWI has removed waste from a combined area of 2.85 acres. The current campaign is in Pit 4 West, under Accelerated Retrieval Project enclosure structure VI.

"With each one of these exhumation projects, the crews become more efficient," said Jim Cooper, Deputy Manager of DOE's Idaho Cleanup Project. "These waste removal projects ultimately protect the underlying Snake River Plain Aquifer and the citizens of Idaho."

CH2M-WG Idaho, LLC, (CWI) directs the Idaho Cleanup Project, the safe, environmental cleanup of DOE's Idaho National Laboratory site, located 45 miles west of Idaho Falls. The 7-year, \$2.9 billion project, funded through the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, focuses on early risk reduction and protection of the Snake River Plain Aquifer.



A protective glovebox allowed workers to sort through Pit 9 waste for repackaging.

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

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