THE IDAHO SITE

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For Immediate Release
March 18, 2010

Idaho Cleanup Project ships first Recovery Act-funded remote-handled transuranic waste out of Idaho

DATELINE – The Idaho Cleanup Project made its first shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on March 11, 2010. This is the first of approximately 150 shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico, which creates dozens of jobs and continues the Department of Energy's commitment to clean up the Idaho Site.

"Recovery Act funds have allowed us to continue fulfilling the Department of Energy's important commitment to clean up the Idaho Site," said Richard B. Provencher, DOE Manager for the ICP. "The credit goes to the employees of the Idaho Cleanup Project, new and old, who work safely everyday to clean up the Idaho Site."

The Idaho Cleanup Project (ICP) has reactivated a large hot cell, or shielded enclosure, which had been dormant since 1988 at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC). The reactivated hot cell allowed over 90 waste canisters, retrieved late last year from the Materials and Fuels Complex, to be remotely opened, sorted and repackaged to meet the waste acceptance criteria at the WIPP repository. The waste can then be shipped out of Idaho -- a major step in complying with the 1995 Settlement Agreement to remove all transuranic waste from Idaho by December 31, 2018.

"We are glad to be in shipping mode. We had a great deal of work to do to bring the INTEC hot cells back online so we could safely process and repackage the remote-handled waste," said Jeff Bradford, Vice President of Waste Management for the Idaho Cleanup Project. "Thanks to the dedication and skill of the ICP workforce, we're shipping waste."

The 150 Recovery Act-funded shipments are in addition to ICP's current shipping campaign that recently sent its 200th shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste to WIPP and is now 90 percent complete.

Transuranic, also called TRU waste, contains more than 100 nanocuries of alpha-emitting isotopes per gram of waste with half lives greater than 20 years, including americium-241 and plutonium. It can consist of protective gear, tools, residue and debris. The Idaho Cleanup Project includes the safe, environmental cleanup of DOE's Idaho 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.

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

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DOE-ID-10-003

Editorial Date March 19, 2010
By Brad Bugger