

Energy Department and INL highlight continued commitment to openness

One of the first things President Barack Obama did when he came into office earlier this year was to issue a memo to government agencies outlining his commitment to openness in government. Energy Secretary Steven Chu recently amplified that commitment in a memo to his senior managers, which was shared with all U.S. Department of Energy employees nationwide.

In Idaho, the DOE's Idaho Operations Office and Idaho National Laboratory have been committed to openness in government for many years. The department and the lab have established good working relationships with stakeholders throughout the region, and remain committed to keeping the lines of communication open.



Dennis Miotla

“Senior managers from both the Department of Energy and Idaho National Lab have spent a lot of time communicating with our stakeholders to keep them informed about what we are doing here and to listen to their concerns,” said Dennis Miotla, interim manager of the DOE's Idaho Operations Office. “In recent months, we've met with numerous groups ranging from the Snake River Alliance to Grow Idaho Falls. Recently, a group from the lab traveled to Jackson, Wyo., to brief Keep Yellowstone Nuclear Free on the status of our key programs.”

While DOE and INL managers may not always agree with the philosophy or goals of the various stakeholder organizations, they understand the need to communicate with them, Miotla said.

“Our No. 1 responsibility as a federal agency is to protect people and the environment, a close second is to be a good steward of taxpayers' dollars and assets. Included in that responsibility is communicating with the public about what we are doing with their money, why we do what we do, and how we go about doing it.”

In addition to providing briefings to stakeholder groups, DOE and INL are both working to utilize new media opportunities to provide information to the public about the organizations' activities. For example, INL regularly posts videos to YouTube and produces weekly podcasts about its activities, which are available on iTunes. DOE-ID also frequently updates its online website to ensure the available information is current and useful for the public.

Additionally, the Idaho Operations Office is committed to quickly turning around Freedom of Information Act requests, a topic of President Obama's initial memo on government openness.

The Department welcomes input on how it can better communicate with the public. To make suggestions, please contact Brad Bugger, DOE-ID Public Affairs Officer, at (208) 526-0833, bpbugger@id.doe.gov.

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