

U.S. Department of Energy Keeps Its Cleanup Commitments

By ELIZABETH SELLERS

As significant progress continues on cleanup of legacy environmental challenges at the Idaho National Laboratory, there are two points I'd like to emphasize:

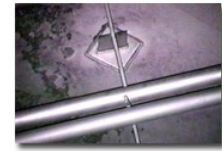
1. The U.S. Department of Energy is keeping its promises to Idahoans. In the last 20 years, DOE has met, on time or ahead of schedule, 632 of 636 cleanup milestones under agreements with its regulators; the other four milestones were subsequently met, or restructured as a result of changed conditions.
2. DOE, its contractors and its regulators are working together to make substantial progress in the three areas of most concern to Idahoans: removing and shipping targeted buried waste, closing underground waste storage tanks, and shipping stored waste out of state.



Workers sort previously-buried waste.

Taken together, these actions constitute continued focus and progress in our commitment to safeguard the Snake River Plain Aquifer, which underlies much of the INL.

Let me expand on my second point. Under its contract with DOE, our cleanup contractor, CWI, is actively engaged in digging up targeted wastes contaminated with radioactive elements and hazardous chemicals that were buried at the INL's Radioactive



Inside of underground waste storage tank after cleaning was completed ready for grouting to begin.



Shipment of waste leaving the INL to WIPP for final disposal.

Waste Management Complex between 1954 and 1970. CWI is committed to excavate targeted buried waste from 2.8 acres of the burial ground, and has excavated over 2,200 containers of buried waste so far. This waste is being characterized, repackaged and shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), a permanent repository in New Mexico.

In addition, since 1996, about 230,000 pounds of organic chemicals have been removed from the burial ground using vapor vacuum extraction units, brought to the surface and destroyed. These are "interim actions," taken to address concerns about the Snake River Plain Aquifer.

Additionally, DOE recently submitted to our regulators a proposed plan that outlines its recommendations for addressing the remainder of the buried waste. Once we incorporate comments from the State of Idaho and the Environmental Protection Agency, the proposed plan will be issued for public review and comment, later this year. If you'd like more information on the studies that formed the basis for this proposed plan, visit CWI's web site at <https://idahocleanupproject.com/>.

Meanwhile, the INL Site's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility is the No. 1 shipper of stored transuranic waste (plutonium-contaminated waste that was received and stored at the Idaho site between 1970 and the late 1980s) to WIPP for final disposal. Idaho has shipped over 18,000 cubic meters of transuranic waste to WIPP. All of the stored waste will be shipped to WIPP over the next several years.

Finally, CWI has also successfully cleaned, and has completed 85 percent (to date) of the grouting of 11 underground tanks that were used to store radioactive liquid waste at the INL. About 900,000 gallons of liquid waste remain in three other tanks. A waste treatment unit is under construction to process that waste, and the remaining tanks will then be cleaned and grouted in time to meet another DOE commitment – to clean and close all the waste tanks by 2012.

The Department of Energy recognizes that keeping its cleanup commitments is the key to establishing trust for all our work at the INL Site, including our cutting edge nuclear energy research. We invite you to visit the site to see our progress firsthand. If you're interested in a tour, call our toll-free number at (800) 708-2680.

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09/24/2007