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Three major technical issues resolved at Hanford plant

RICHLAND, Wash. – The U.S. Department of Energy has resolved three major technical issues at the Hanford Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant (WTP) project, further increasing the safety of the planned facility and allowing some design activities to resume at the Pretreatment (PT) Facility.

On Jan. 24, Acting DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Sue Cange notified the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) that Technical Issues 1-3, identified in 2012 as affecting WTP, have been resolved.

“Resolving these three technical issues is critically important to fulfilling the River Protection Project mission,” said DOE Office of River Protection Manager Kevin Smith. “We are committed to ensuring the safe building, start-up and operation of the WTP.”

The three technical issues involved:

- The potential generation and accumulation of hydrogen in process vessels;
- The potential for nuclear criticality in process vessels; and
- The potential for hydrogen accumulation of in pipes and non-process vessels.

After the issues were identified, technical and nuclear safety teams were formed to resolve each issue. For the three resolved issues, engineering studies and nuclear safety evaluations were performed to analyze the issues. The teams proposed and confirmed the design features, process changes, and safety controls to address the issues.

“I could not be prouder of our WTP technical and nuclear safety teams for their focus and commitment to resolve these technical issues by the end of 2016,” said Bill Hamel, ORP’s assistant manager for the WTP Project.

The WTP is being built to treat radioactive and chemical tank waste resulting from plutonium production activities at the Hanford site during World War II and the Cold War-era. The WTP will immobilize the tank waste in glass, a process known as vitrification, and consists of five major facilities—the Low-Activity Waste (LAW) Facility, the HLW Facility, the PT Facility (which separates LAW from HLW), an Analytical Laboratory and the Balance of Facilities (BOF) (a set of support facilities to provide services, connectivity and power).

DOE is working to resolve the remaining technical issues at the WTP project by the end of 2018.

Find the letter to former DNFSB Chairman Joyce Connery and supporting documentation [here](#).

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