For Immediate Release:
Jan. 4, 2017

Media Contacts:
Destry Henderson, CH2M, (509) 376-8644, destry_j_henderson@rl.gov

Demolition Underway at a Historic, Hazardous Hanford Facility

RICHLAND, Wash. – Heavy equipment is now conducting demolition on a building nicknamed after the man who received the highest ever recorded dose of radiation at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford Site. Cleanup contractor CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CH2M) recently began demolishing the Americium Recovery Facility, also known as the "McCluskey Room." The Americium Recovery Facility is the second of four major buildings to undergo demolition that make up the Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP).

"Demolition is progressing safely, deliberately and well," said Tom Teynor, project director of the DOE PFP Closure Division. "Starting demolition of the Americium Recovery Facility brings another chapter of Hanford history to an end and represents a significant hazard reduction on the site."

During plutonium production at the plant, the Americium Recovery Facility separated radioactive americium for other uses. The facility was nicknamed the "McCluskey Room" by workers after a chemical reaction and explosion inside processing equipment occurred in 1976. Harold McCluskey was

working in the facility at the time and was seriously injured. He received a dose of radioactive americium that was 500 times the amount deemed safe. McCluskey died 11 years later of unrelated causes.

The facility never resumed operations after the 1976 incident. At one point the doors were welded shut, and few entries into the facility occurred since the incident. In 2014, CH2M crews began demolition preparations in the room. By early 2016, the remaining contaminated pieces of processing equipment were removed from the room. Other items, like chemical tanks, were prepared for removal from the building during demolition.

“The PFP team has done a tremendous job safely performing this hazardous work – whether it’s cleaning out the buildings or demolishing them,” said Tom Bratvold, vice president of the PFP closure project at CH2M. “We are making steady progress, and we will continue to do so safely.”

CH2M employees began demolition of the Plutonium Finishing Plant complex in November 2016 by starting demolition of the Plutonium Reclamation Facility (PRF). That facility is approximately one-third demolished at this point. Demolition of both buildings is expected to be complete by March 2017. Demolition will then progress to the main PFP processing facility and finally to the facility’s ventilation building and stack. Demolition of the entire PFP complex is scheduled to be completed by September 2017.

Media Available:

Video footage of Americium Recovery Facility demolition
Video footage of crews preparing to enter the “McCluskey Room”
Video overview of Plutonium Finishing Plant (courtesy Hanford Communities)

The Department of Energy’s Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) manages the Hanford Site near Richland, Washington. Along with the DOE Office of River Protection (ORP), DOE-RL is responsible for the federal government’s cleanup of the legacy of more than 40 years of plutonium production at Hanford for the nation’s defense. Except for the tank waste mission managed by ORP, DOE-RL is responsible for cleanup of all remaining Hanford waste streams and is currently focused on cleaning out and demolishing the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and solid waste, treating contaminated groundwater, moving radioactive sludge out of the K West Basin and away from the Columbia River, and configuring Hanford Site infrastructure for the future. The office oversees Hanford Site work that is conducted by a federal and contractor workforce of approximately 4,200 personnel. For more information, visit www.hanford.gov.

CH2M is a global engineering and project delivery company partnering with public and private clients to tackle the world's most complex infrastructure and natural resource challenges. The firm's work is concentrated in the water, transportation, energy, environment and industrial markets. CH2M has gross revenues of $5.4 billion, has 22,000 employees and is a specialist in program, construction and operations management and design. For more information, visit www.ch2m.com.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY | Richland Operations Office

STAY CONNECTED: