

# DOE NEWS

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Rich Buel , DOE-RL (509) 376-3375  
Geoff Tyree, Fluor Hanford (509) 372-1145

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

March 20, 2008

## **DRAINING OF HANFORD SPENT FUEL POOL COMPLETED**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and contractor Fluor Hanford have finished draining Hanford’s K East Basin, a pool that used to hold Cold-War-era spent fuel located about 400 yards from the Columbia River at DOE’s Hanford Site in Washington State.

Draining the K East Basin paves the way for demolishing the basin – a key step in completing the cleanup of Hanford’s River Corridor. Workers began draining the basin in February, working around the clock to transport the contaminated water in 5,000-gallon tanker trucks to a treatment facility on the Hanford Site. More than 220 trips were made to complete the cleanup effort.

“This work is critical to completing the cleanup of the River Corridor,” said DOE Richland Operations Office Manager Dave Brockman. “We have eliminated the risk the

contaminants in the basin pose to the Columbia River, and now we can get to the underlying contaminated soil.”

The large, concrete K East Basin once held approximately one million gallons of water that had provided shielding for more than 1,100 tons of uranium metal fuel rods, known as spent nuclear fuel, from Hanford reactors. The basin also held radioactive sludge – a combination of dirt, sand, and corrosion products that formed throughout the years of underwater spent fuel storage. Workers finished removing the spent fuel from the basin in 2004 and finished removing the radioactive sludge in May 2007.

During the draining of the K East Basin, every precaution was taken to protect the safety and health of the workers performing this important task. Work was done remotely, minimizing the need for workers to enter the basin. As the water was removed, a thin coating of fixative was applied to the basin walls to glue residual contamination in place.

The basin will now be filled with a sand-like material, which will provide a working platform for heavy equipment to be brought in to tear down the basin building, or superstructure, this summer. Ultimately, the basin itself will be removed to access soil contaminated by water leaks from the basin in the 1970s and the 1990s.

“Draining the basin is a big achievement, and one that we and Hanford’s stakeholders have been looking forward to,” said Con Murphy, president and CEO of Fluor Hanford. “This means we can fill up the basin with sand and start demolishing the building, and ultimately, remove this facility that used to be one of the greatest hazards on the Hanford Site.”

###

RL-08-0012