



DECOMMISSIONING THE VERMONT YANKEE REACTOR – HOW MUCH RADIOACTIVITY REMAINS AND WHERE IT’S LOCATED

News Release — New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution
Sept. 25, 2013

Decommissioning the Vermont Yankee reactor – how much radioactivity remains and where it’s located will be addressed by Dr. Marvin Resnikoff at 5 p.m. Sept. 28 at the Robert H. Gibson River Garden in Brattleboro. He will speak from personal experience in dealing with reactor decommissioning, the **West Valley, NY reprocessing plant** and Maxey Flats, KY nuclear waste landfill. He brings a critical view to the plans and problems of Entergy delaying dismantling Vermont Yankee for 60 years, and what has been learned post-shutdown at other reactors, including CT Yankee.

Dr. Resnikoff, a recent addition to the NEC board, is Senior Associate at Radioactive Waste Management Associates where he is an international consultant on radioactive waste management issues. He has a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Michigan and has published four books on radioactive waste. He is extremely familiar with issues at Vermont Yankee, Indian Point near New York City and other reactors nationally. His expertise includes dose reconstruction and risk assessment studies of radioactive waste facilities as well as issues surrounding the transportation of radioactive materials.

The talk is free and open to the public and so is the New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution’s 42nd Annual Membership Meeting, which convenes at 4:00 pm at the River Garden to conduct the annual business of the organization, election of trustees and review NEC’s current legal and regulatory initiatives related to Entergy Vermont Yankee and NEC’s work ahead.

A potluck dinner, awards and music will begin at 6 p.m. Members meeting starts at 4 p.m.

All are welcome!

Come learn more about how you can help be part of successfully navigating our community through the new unknowns Vermont Yankee presents.

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Unanticipated Radioactive Contamination Found During Excavation At WVDP

Posted: Friday, September 27, 2013 8:00 am

By Rick Miller, Special to The Press

ASHFORD — Unanticipated radioactive contamination was discovered during excavation for a concrete pad at the West Valley Demonstration Project where large casks containing radioactive, glass logs encased in 10-foot by 2-foot stainless steel canisters and will be stored until a national repository is available

The level of contamination, found in a fill area at the south end of the site, was not disclosed. Testing of the samples temporarily halted excavation while radiological teams determined the extent of the contamination. Contaminated soil was placed in five modular packs.

The contamination was disclosed by Heatherly Dukes, manager of the high-level waste project for CH2M Hill Babcock & Wilcox West Valley (CHBWV), during a meeting Wednesday night, Sept. 25, of the West Valley Citizen Task Force. The area beneath the concrete storage pad site was excavated to a depth of 12 to 15 feet.

The 144-foot by 110-foot concrete pad will be three feet thick and hold 55 casks, each with five stainless steel canisters with the radioactive glass logs. The pad and casks have a 50-year design life.

The canisters are currently located in the chemical process cell of the Main Process Building, which is slated for decommissioning and demolition. However, the canisters must first be packed in the multi-purpose containers and hauled to the concrete pad, which could take two years, and could begin in 2015 or 2016. The determining factor will be to what level the DOE will require the outside of the canisters to be cleaned. Some radioactive dust has settled on the top of the canisters during their storage.

Dukes also outlined the plan to bring 800 gravel trucks to the West Valley site over the next 10 days to fill in the excavation and compact the gravel to Department of Energy (DOE) specifications. The trucks, more than 70 a day, will enter through the normally locked south gate, empty their load and exit through the construction gate at the northern part of the site.

Next, loads of steel rebar and other supplies will begin to arrive, followed by an estimated 100 concrete trucks — one truck every three to six minutes — in a carefully choreographed operation. Those trucks will also enter via Schoolhouse Road through the south gate. The concrete must be tested for quality control on site.

Bryan Bower, director of the West Valley site for the Department of Energy, said signs are up warning local residents of the large number of trucks that will be going to and from the site in coming weeks.

The contractor and the DOE officials have not yet decided whether the additional excavation costs will be part of the contract or an add-on that the DOE will pay.

One member of the Citizens Task Force, Joseph Pati, said the task force needed to press for a target of \$75 million a year for clean-up at the West Valley site, where in the mid-1960s to early 1970s, a private company, Nuclear Fuel Services, reprocessed spent nuclear fuel rods. The company went out of business in 1975, leaving the site to New York State.

The cleanup of the site started after the West Valley Demonstration project Bill of 1980 was approved with major input from the late Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan and former Rep. Stan Lundine.

This year, it looked like the West Valley clean-up budget would dip to \$50 million, but under quirky sequestration rules, West Valley actually got more, Bower explained. This year's appropriation is about \$66 million. He said to justify an increase to \$75 million would require a push by the Citizen Task Force to convince not only the DOE officials in Washington, but House and Senate committees that hold the purse strings for cleanup sites across the country.

Bower said there were \$20 million a year in "hotel costs" at West Valley, which he described as costs that would be incurred even if all other work stopped.

Bower said he thought the DOE and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) officials were making progress in deciding what studies need to be undertaken during the Phase 1 process to be ready for Phase 2 which will determine the extent and methods of cleanup for high-level waste tanks and other issues.

Paul Bemba, who is director of the West Valley office of NYSERDA, agreed, saying the two were "very close to an agreement" for the analytical framework for future studies.

The Buffalo News

October 3, 2013

Federal shutdown could slow West Valley project

By Chris Chapman / Cattaraugus Correspondent

OLEAN – Decommissioning work continues at the West Valley Demonstration project, despite the shutdown of the federal government.

Dan Coyne, president of CHBWV, the decommissioning team on the job since 2011, said work is on track but the federal shutdown and its impact on Department of Energy budgets could change things.

Coyne told the Cattaraugus County Board of Health Wednesday that the shutdown could affect one big component of the project: the removal from the site of the melter and related buildings used to encapsulate spent nuclear fuel rods.

The melter eventually would be removed to another site by rail. Permission for that move could be delayed by the shutdown, Coyne said,

Crews encountered a minor problem recently, he added. While removing soil for a mammoth storage pad being constructed, a small amount of contaminated asphalt was discovered. “The levels were minuscule,” Coyne said, “but we took the time to shut everything down, run tests and make sure it was gone. It appears it was nothing more than a small spill on the asphalt.”

The pad, which will be poured in the coming weeks, is where glass-encased rods will be stored once removed from other buildings on the site. The pad will accommodate 56 vertical storage casks, until they can be removed permanently to an eventual federal repository for nuclear waste.

Coyne said crews have removed 30,000 square feet of buildings and more than 20,000 truckloads of waste from previous contractors, as well as another 100,000 cubic feet of waste generated since August 2011.

The current phase is scheduled to be completed in 2018. The final phase – determining the future of the site in northern Cattaraugus County – is “years and years away,” according to Coyne.



West Valley Decommission Continues With Worker Safety In Mind

October 13, 2013

By Chris Chapman (editorial@post-journal.com), The Post-Journal

OLEAN - "As the head of one of these jobs, you always have to worry about someone making that wrong step and getting hurt or killed. This is dangerous work," Dan Coyne, president of CHBWV, the decommissioning team in charge of the former West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project, told members of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health.

Of the accomplishments Coyne said he is proud of, is that his crews on the site have gone into the 10th month of the calendar year with no recordable injuries. In the business they are in, that is a feat, he said. It is a dangerous business that requires the use of large machinery and close contact with many forms of hazardous waste.

His company took the helm at the site, situated along the northern border of Cattaraugus County in August 2011. Their job has been to secure and decommission all the buildings on the site, leading up to demolition of the structures once used to encapsulate spent fuel rods in glass for storage.

A recordable injury is one that requires medical attention with medicine or prolonged visit, according to Coyne. He said the facility has seen the regular problems, like a bee sting, but nothing serious.

"We have instituted a policy of 24/7 health," Coyne said. "We care about what they do at home, as well as on the job. We have a 'know your numbers' program that can give you your body's age."

The company has also instituted a walking program, giving all employees a pedometer and walking challenges at lunch time, he said.

Along with the safety of those on the site, a recent drill took readiness into account, Coyne continued. The energy emergency exercise was meant to measure the response to a complex emergency situation at the facility. The exercise conducted dealt with a contamination fire with injuries. One of the injured had to be medevaced from the facility. According to the scenario, the aircraft would become part of the situation by crashing into the facility, creating a larger emergency.

"We did very well with it," he said. "As you can see, we work on a very complex scale."

In terms of project progress, Coyne told the members of the board that everything looks to be right on track, despite a few setbacks. One of those setbacks comes in the form of the federal government shutdown. Not knowing how the shutdown is going to affect the Department of Energy's budget for projects like West Valley, business has continued as usual. The shutdown could affect one aspect of the project in that the melter and accompanying buildings used to encapsulate the spent rods may not be able to be moved off site as has been in the works.

The melter, a single unit, would need to be transported to a transloading station, where it would be loaded onto a railcar for transport to another facility, he said. When that piece was brought to the site, it arrived on a 50-axle truck trailer. Permission for that move may not come under a government shutdown.



Another short-lived problem cropped up when, as crews were removing soil for a solid base on a storage pad that is being constructed, a small amount of old asphalt was found to have small amount of contamination.

"The levels were minuscule," Coyne said, "but we took the time to shut everything down, run tests and make sure it was gone. IT appears it was nothing more than a small spill on the asphalt."

The pad that will be poured in the coming weeks will sit on 13 feet of new, compressed soil. The pad, itself, will be 3 feet thick, reinforced with 1/8-inch rebar. That pad is where the glass-coated rods will be stored once they are removed from their current home in one of the buildings on the site.

The pad will have 56 vertical storage casks on top of it. The rods, encased in steel tubes, will be placed in these concrete tubes and sealed as they await the opening of a federal repository. Each of the casts will weigh around 84.5 tons apiece. The pad and the tubes have been designed to withstand earthquakes, flooding and some powerful winds, Coyne said. The pad is scheduled to be ready by the end of October, for use in November.

The mission of the phase, according to Coyne, in decommissioning and demolishing buildings, has been successful. He said his crews have removed 30,000 square feet of building footprint, and have removed over 20,000 trucks of waste created by previous contractors, and another 100,000 cubic feet of waste generated since August 2011.

The current phase is scheduled to be completed in 2018, with a final phase of determining the future of the site still being "years and years away," according to Coyne.

Heatherly Dukes named woman of distinction

Wednesday October 23, 2013 | By:Submitted to Journal | Social

WEST VALLEY — Girl Scouts of Western New York has announced that the 2013 Woman of Distinction Award recipient in the science, technology, engineering and math category is Heatherly Dukes, vice president of nuclear operations and storage at CH2M HILL B&W West Valley LLC. Dukes received her award during a recent ceremony at Salvatore's Italian Gardens in Depew.



Heatherly Dukes

Women of Distinction is a girl-led signature fundraising event for Girl Scouts of Western New York, and it also provides girls in grades 9-12 the opportunity to receive mentorship from honorees and to gain leadership skills, through roles such as greeting guests at the event.

To be eligible for this award, women are nominated by members of the community. Nominees must live or work in Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans or Wyoming counties and must have demonstrated leadership in their careers and in their communities, through public service, and be considered role models for girls, by the committee.

This year, the selection committee received numerous nominations and chose one honoree for each of the following categories: arts and humanities, business, entrepreneur, education, Girl Scout volunteer, healthcare, public service, sports and fitness and STEM.

As the recipient of the Women of Distinction award in the STEM category, Dukes has more than 36 years of experience in the nuclear industry, with 22 years of management experience in areas such as operations, waste management, engineering, maintenance, deactivation and decommissioning, as well as nuclear materials management.

In her current position, she manages the Department of Energy's West Valley Demonstration Project. The site's mission is to close and decommission most of the nuclear facilities. Her efforts include overseeing operations and maintenance for the site's infrastructure, transitioning facilities for turnover, to allow deactivation and decommissioning, and for constructing a new High Level Waste Interim Storage System, which will house 278 canistered waste forms, consisting of highly radioactive vitrified glass waste.

Dukes holds a bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering from the University of Florida.

For the Women of Distinction Program, Dukes mentored Nina Ragland of Williamsville. Ragland presented Dukes with her award, during the awards ceremony.

For more information on Women of Distinction, visit gswny.org.