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WVDP team develops conveyor system to increase safety

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Springville Journal Staff

WEST VALLEY – A deactivation and decommissioning crew developed a conveyor system at the West Valley Demonstration Project to safely remove asbestos-containing material from inside the main plant process building. The wall plaster on several floors of the building contains ACM, which is being removed in preparation for its future demolition. A total of 56,000 pounds of wall plaster was recently removed from the fourth floor. The main plant was constructed between 1963-1966 as a commercial reprocessing facility to recover reusable plutonium and uranium from spent nuclear reactor fuel.



Three 900-pound lift bags filled with ACM sit on the employee-designed conveyor system used to improve safety and increase efficiency.

To increase safety and limit the amount of contact with asbestos materials, workers helped design, test, and build a conveyor system for the ACM work evolution. Using lessons learned from a previous ACM job, the conveyor system used readily available equipment making it easier and less expensive to build.

“This team took an issue and turned it into an opportunity by putting their knowledge into practice,” DOE-WVDP Federal Project Director Dan Sullivan said. “The safe and compliant disposition of asbestos-containing material is another important step in the progress towards the future demolition of the main plant.”

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Workers filled smaller 25-pound bags with ACM and placed them into much larger 900-pound capacity lift bags. The lift bags were transported on the conveyor system from inside the main plant to an outside overhead crane. The crane lowered each lift bag to the ground, so that a fork truck could place them into a waste container for offsite disposal.

D&D Manager Dale Macklem, commended his crew for their ingenuity in turning an idea into a reality.

“Working with asbestos-containing material is the most physically-challenging work at the site when you include radiological and industrial hazards, layers of protective clothing and warm temperatures. This crew used lessons learned to enhance safety, improve efficiency and reduce exposure to job-related hazards. They put their collective knowledge into practice, and that’s to be commended.”