

West Valley Prepares for Future D&D Under New Safety Protocols



Workers install a new hoist in the Main Plant Process Building to be used for moving waste boxes and drums and other work when the **West Valley Demonstration Project** returns to full operations.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – An EM facility disposition crew recently replaced a hoist in the Main Plant Process Building, marking the **West Valley Demonstration Project's (WVDP)** first work activity in which workers donned personal protective equipment while following safety protocols due to COVID-19.



Replacing the hoist in the Equipment Decontamination Room, as WVDP operated in an essential mission-critical posture, also signified progress toward a broader project — the future demolition of the Main Plant Process Building — included in EM’s priorities for 2020.

The new equipment will be used to shift an aerial lift into a chemical process cell and move boxes and drums filled with waste when the site returns to full operations and crews resume deactivation work inside a former reprocessing cell in the building.

Before replacing the hoist, employees discussed questions and concerns with supervisors and senior staff in a collaborative, inclusive manner. The discussions focused on how to maintain social distancing while helping one another don and doff personal protective equipment, including respirators.

The team agreed to a safe approach in which employees maintain six feet of distance when possible and wear face masks. Only one worker at a time is allowed to exit an area to avoid clustering, and they must cover the respirator exhalation ports with towels to reduce exhaled vapor droplets from escaping while the workers help each other put on equipment, among other things.

EM WVDP Safety and Site Programs Team Leader Jennifer Dundas commended the team members for their pre-job briefing and work.

“Encouraging employees to speak freely when confronting an issue or challenge is the best way to solve a problem,” Dundas said. “It fosters the sharing of ideas and allows everyone an opportunity to be part of the solution. In the end, their agreed-upon solution helped them to safely complete this work activity.”

Lessons learned from the project will be applied to future cleanup work at the site. The lessons include the importance of refocusing on safety, being aware of changing conditions and new protocols, and getting acquainted with procedures, work packages, and radiation work permits.

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