



## EM, Los Alamos National Laboratory Preserve America's Nuclear Knowledge Base



*Team members at the Denver Federal Center are shown after loading archive material for secure transport to Los Alamos National Laboratory in August.*

**DENVER** – A little-known team of experts at the Denver Federal Center and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is preserving America's nuclear weapons research, a commitment that involves capturing, organizing, and digitizing decades of information.

Hundreds of boxes sit at the Denver center, filled with hard copies of data, reports, laboratory notebooks, welding procedures, and technical illustrations. The boxes came from all over the U.S. nuclear complex, including [Rocky Flats](#), [Mound](#), [Pinellas](#), and other [EM](#) field sites after their successful closures.

The Rocky Flats Plant in Golden, Colorado was a large manufacturing hub that churned out the majority of the nuclear weapon pits that still exist in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. The site's weapons mission ended in the early 1990s and most of its records sat in storage until recent years.

[Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center](#) (EMCBC) Classification Officer Jill McLaughlin and Classification Program Manager Lisa Fulks recently hosted a 14-member LANL team at the Denver center. The team included personnel from plutonium operations, security, and logistics tasked with packaging and shipping 519 boxes of classified records and media from the Denver center to LANL.

The successful shipment of boxes was completed in late August, reducing the inventory of classified materials at the center by a third. The shipment filled a special large tractor-trailer truck.

The team is set to perform a complete document inventory, digitize the contents of the boxes, and create an archive library.

"We are working as fast as we can to provide access to the entire collection of nuclear weapons manufacturing and research records," said Dr. Robert Putnam, a chief scientist at LANL. "The work we're doing is critical to preserving America's nuclear knowledge. We need to ensure that the next generation has access to historical information. If you've never been taught to run procedures for a nuclear facility, we're ensuring you can learn from history."



In fiscal 2020, Joe Watts, LANL project manager, organized 1.7 terabytes of other related electronic classified information — equivalent to about 130 million pages of information, an amount that would fill more than 2,000 file cabinets — and provided the LANL Weapons Programs and EMCBC Classification Office access to it.

That electronic recovery resulted in several million dollars of cost savings for the DOE weapons programs. LANL canceled a planned plutonium metallurgy study when experimental data from Rocky Flats answered the scientific questions asked by weapon design engineers. Elimination of the experiments saved funding and schedule time, and reduced potential radiation exposures for workers.

The EMCBC Classification Office has been working with Watts for more than two years to prepare for the upcoming transfer of classified documents in both electronic and hard-copy form from the Denver center.

"We greatly appreciate the valuable efforts of the LANL team, and look forward to continuing the positive work relationship as the recovery and digitization of the documents continue," said Jack Zimmerman, director of the EMCBC. "Mr. Watts' leadership has been innovative and adaptable despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic."

While the EMCBC Classification Office focuses on classification reviews for various EM field sites such as the [Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#), [Los Alamos Field Office](#), [Nevada Program](#), [West Valley Demonstration Project](#), [Energy Technology Engineering Center](#), and [Separations Process Research Unit](#), the office also works to release non-classified documents to EM field sites, the DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM), and the greater public in support of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and other matters.

The office also releases scientific and technical information as required. Digitization of the contents from the Denver center boxes will enable quicker responses by EMCBC and LM for public releases.

The joint EMCBC-LANL team will continue to coordinate efforts to inventory the collection at the Denver center, declassify contents where possible, update classification markings, and digitize the collection with robust metadata that will enable rapid keyword searches.

The project, including digital conversion, is expected to take months, but once complete, will provide secure electronic access to scientists, engineers, training professionals, FOIA programs, record managers, librarians, historians, and other interested parties.

*-Contributor: Stephanie Shewmon*

## EM Contractors Recognized for Safety and Health Excellence



Workers at the **West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP)** demolished a nearly 7,000-square-foot utility building, shown here, earlier this year. **WVDP** cleanup contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley received the DOE Voluntary Protection Program Star of Excellence this year for its robust safety program. **WVDP** has been a VPP site for 20 years.

**EM** contractors across the complex have been honored with a variety of awards for safety and health excellence in DOE's [Voluntary Protection Program](#) (VPP) this year.

Working through cooperative efforts among labor, management, and government at DOE contractor sites, the VPP promotes improved safety and health performance through public recognition of outstanding programs.

The awards were presented during the Annual DOE-VPP Participants Meeting. Normally this meeting would have been part of the Annual Safety+ Symposium sponsored by the Voluntary Protection Programs Participants Association, but this year's symposium was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was held virtually and the awards were shipped to the winners.



Two employees at the [Savannah River Site](#) were honored with the VPP Champion Award, given to only three employees in the DOE complex each year. The site's awardees were Melanie Gibson, with liquid waste contractor Savannah River Remediation, and George Wisner, with EM contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.

The VPP Star of Excellence Award is presented to VPP Star sites that maintain an injury/illness rate at least 75% below the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) industry average, meet annual VPP goals, actively mentor other companies, and demonstrate strong community involvement.

The following companies received the VPP Star of Excellence Award:

- CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, cleanup contractor at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#).
- CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Company, EM [Richland Operations Office](#) contractor at the [Hanford Site](#).
- Fluor Idaho, cleanup contractor at the [Idaho National Laboratory Site](#).
- Mission Support Alliance, site services contractor at the Hanford Site.
- Parsons, [Salt Waste Processing Facility](#) contractor at Savannah River Site.
- Portsmouth Mission Alliance, EM [Portsmouth Site](#) infrastructure support services contractor at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant.
- Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, EM contractor at Savannah River Site.
- Savannah River Remediation, liquid waste contractor at Savannah River Site.
- Washington River Protection Solutions, tank operations contractor at the Hanford Site.

The VPP Superior Star Award is presented to VPP Star sites that maintain an injury/illness rate 50 percent better than comparison industry based on BLS data, meet annual VPP goals, actively mentor other companies, and demonstrate strong community involvement.

The following companies received VPP Superior Star Awards:

- North Wind Solutions, EM contractor at the [Transuranic Waste Processing Center](#) at [Oak Ridge](#).
- Wastren Advantage, EM contractor at the [222-S Laboratory](#) at the Hanford Site.
- Waste Treatment Completion Company, Bechtel National Inc. subcontractor at the [Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant](#) at the Hanford Site.

The DOE VPP Legacy of Stars Award distinguishes a company that has excelled in outreach and mentoring, and has demonstrated sustained excellence in worker safety and health. The award goes to those that would have achieved the Star of Excellence for a fourth consecutive year. They receive the Legacy of Stars Award in lieu of a fourth Star of Excellence Award.

The following companies received VPP Legacy of Stars Awards:

- Intermech, a subcontractor to Waste Treatment Completion Company at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant at the Hanford Site.
- Mission Support Alliance, site services contractor at the Hanford Site.
- UCOR, Oak Ridge cleanup contractor.



VPP began in 1994 to promote improved safety and health performance through publicly recognizing outstanding programs. Since that time, DOE has seen improved labor and management relations, reduced workplace injuries and illnesses, increased employee involvement, improved morale, and reduced absenteeism at participating sites.

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