

West Valley Employees Improve ‘Suit-up’ for Contaminated Cell Entry



CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley Facility Disposition Supervisor Tim Wittmeyer, left, and co-worker Mike Sexton demonstrate donning and doffing personal protective equipment during a mock-up session at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#).

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – A crew at [EM’s West Valley Demonstration Project \(WVDP\)](#) recently conducted several mock-up sessions in which employees practiced properly suiting up before entering the Main Plant Process Building to prepare it for future demolition.

They received hands-on practice for helping co-workers don and doff personal protective equipment while following new COVID-19 protocols, such as use of plastic face shields in addition to face coverings.

The sessions were conducted based on employee safety feedback, lessons learned, and continuous improvement discussions among employees and managers.



“After the planned annual shutdown between Christmas and New Year’s, it was imperative that every WVDP team member refocus their attention and awareness on safety, which includes reviewing procedures, work instruction packages, and checking their work areas for changing conditions,” said Ken Whitham, vice president of environmental, safety, health and quality for WVDP cleanup contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley (CHBWV). “In addition, they must remember that COVID-19 protocols are still in place, and additional protocols have been added to further enhance safety at the site.”

Todd Olson, CHBWV facility disposition supervisor, said the mock-up suit-up sessions are a good example of what can be accomplished when issues are discussed and ideas are shared.

“Open communication allows employees and supervisors to be more engaged and understand that what they do matters in our future success,” Olson said.

EM WVDP Safety and Site Programs Team Leader Jennifer Dundas commended the team for conducting the mock-ups.

“Listening to employee feedback and implementing their suggestions 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, an agreed-upon solution helps everyone complete their work safely and compliantly.”

-Contributor: Joseph Pillittere