

## Emergency Operations Center opened over WVDP leak

By RICK MILLER  
Olean Times Herald

A leak of radioactive liquid from a container being moved at the **West Valley Demonstration Project** site on Monday triggered activation of the site's Emergency Operations Center.

Kelly Wooley, deputy general manager for CHBWV, the contractor in the cleanup at the **West Valley Demonstration Project**, said liquid was seen leaking from a sure-pack container that was being moved about 2 p.m.

"The operation stopped and the area was secured," Wooley told members of the West Valley Citizens Task Force Wednesday at the group's monthly meeting, held via ZOOM video due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Liquid was spotted on the container, on the trailer that was transporting it and on the ground. The area was isolated, but it was rainy. Sandbags and absorbent pads were placed over the area to limit migration.

Water samples that were collected from area ditches and French Creek came back from analysis as non-detectable for any radioactivity. There did not appear to be any migration, Wooley told the task force.

Tarps were paced over the container and it was monitored overnight. As of Wednesday, Wooley said, there was no indication of spread of radioactivity. The monitoring continues along with the cleanup. There is no indication of further spread and the area has been decontaminated.

The liquid, according to Wooley, appeared to originate from a sampling port on an overpack container. The water may have accumulated from being stored outside. The port has since been sealed, Wooley said.

Wooley also said during the meeting that the U.S. Department of Energy and CHBWV are looking to begin demolition of the Main Process Plant in the spring, by mid- to late-March.

Meanwhile, efforts to remove radioactive elements from the walls of one of the hottest cells in the Main Process Plant, the product purification cell, where plutonium was recovered during reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel.

A process called nitrocion involving jets of chemicals and water removes contamination from the walls that is then recovered.

Wooley said workers are allowed in the cells for very brief periods of time with respirators and bubble suits equipped with radiation and air monitors.

In another cell, workers have drilled holes in the floor in order to use a diamond saw to cut through concrete without creating a lot of dust.

The contractor is working to remove as much contamination from asbestos to radioactive equipment and waste left over from the reprocessing in the 1960s and early 1970s. Radioactivity has leached into some walls and floors.

Hazardous materials have been removed from the Man Process Plant for more than 20 years. They are working now to get the last 2% of the hazardous material that can be removed.

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The Department of Energy and the contractor see the removal of as much the hazardous material as possible prior to demolition will mean less of that material will be released in dust.

There will be a system in place to spray a mist to reduce dust when the demolition is underway. There are onsite and off-site monitors to detect any radioactivity.

There are also plans to capture the water and move it to storage until it can be tested and treated.

The plant closed in 1973. Congress passed the **West Valley Demonstration Project Act** to begin the cleanup in 1980.

Wooley also reported that 333 intermodal containers of soil from installation of the permeable treatment wall designed to capture and treat strontium 90 leaking from beneath the Main Process Plant had been shipped from **WVDP** on 57 rail cars.

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