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Department of Energy completes deactivation of another high hazard cell

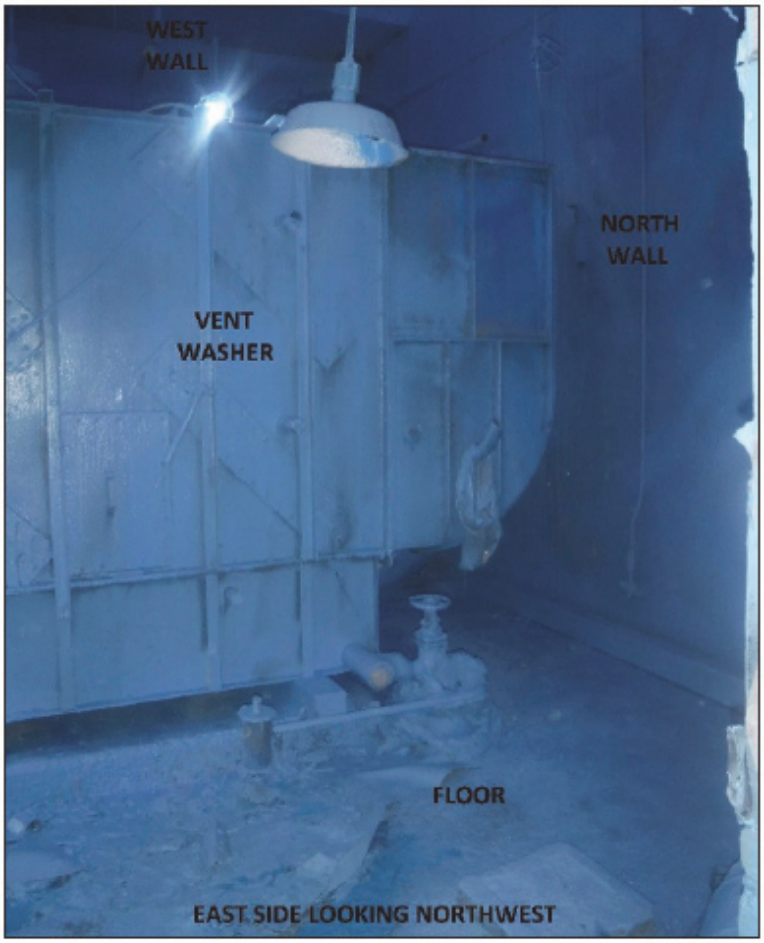

Photo provided

Workers completed the deactivation of the Ventilation Wash Room, which housed a ventilation "scrubber" that removed airborne particulates resulting from fuel reprocessing operations that ceased in 1972. Fixative has been applied to the room in preparation for the future demolition of the Main Plant Process Building.

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The Department of Energy and its prime contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley at the West Valley Demonstration Project completed the deactivation of the Ventilation Wash Room, which housed a ventilation "scrubber" that removed airborne particulates resulting from fuel reprocessing operations that ceased in 1972. During deactivation, the scrubber was prepared for removal and will be removed during the future demolition of the Main Plant Process Building, an EM 2022 Priority.

"The safe execution of this work is due to the combination of extensive planning, deliberate speed and using worker feedback throughout the deactivation," Department of Energy WVDP DOE Federal Project Director for the MPPB Demolition Steve Bousquet said. "The WVDP team continues its strong commitment to safely protecting its workers, the public and the environment while reducing legacy risks at the site."

Deactivation of this cell included the removal of a 26-inch diameter ventilation duct that carried exhaust from past operations at the MPPB. This activity involved 28 cuts and the removal of 19 sections of ventilation duct from the VWR. Finally, workers demobilized equipment, removed debris and applied fixative to the cell.

Incorporation of feedback from workers led to a safe deactivation of the VWR, which included the idea to perform the work remotely to keep potential exposures to radiation as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA). Operators core bored multiple penetrations into the VWR to allow the placement of a diamond wire saw outside the cell. Short entries were made into the cell to adjust the location of the diamond wire prior to each cut of the ventilation duct. Through this approach, operators were able to limit potential exposures, in keeping with ALARA principles. Contingency plans were also included in the work instruction package to provide an effective and immediate response to a differing condition, providing operators with pre-approved instructions should conditions change.

"Working in the VWR was physically challenging when you include radiological and industrial hazards, layers of protective clothing, limited mobility and COVID protocols,'' Tom Dogal said, CHBWV Facility Disposition Manager. "This crew used lessons learned to enhance safety, improve efficiency and reduce exposure to job-related hazards. They put their collective knowledge into practice."

During fuel reprocess activities in the 1960s and 1970s, several other areas within the MPPB, including the product purification and chemical process cells, and a fuel receiving and storage facility — sent exhaust to the VWR through the ductwork. The exhaust was then directed to a ventilation exhaust cell where it was filtered before being discharged to the plant's stack.