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Bechtel, US Department of Energy Set Path to Complete Key Nuclear Facility

Project Will Treat and Immobilize Manhattan Project and Cold War Radioactive Waste

RESTON, Virginia, September 30, 2014—Bechtel announced that the U.S. Department of Energy has authorized the company to resume engineering work on a key facility in a complex of buildings at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant—a facility in Washington state that will treat some of the nation's most challenging liquid radioactive waste. The resumption comes after considerable progress toward resolving technical matters for the High-Level Waste Vitrification Facility, where the most radioactive of the stored liquid will be processed.

"This announcement is a major step forward for the project and moves us closer to meeting the nation's cleanup obligations at Hanford," said Peggy McCullough, Bechtel's project director at the Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant. "We will continue to work closely with the Department to ensure the safety and quality of the facility."

The government has contracted Bechtel National, Inc. to build the multi-facility complex at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington. The plant will turn waste into a stable, solid glass form using a process called vitrification. Some 56 million gallons of radioactive waste await treatment there, stored in 177 underground tanks. The waste is a by-product of plutonium production from the 1940s Manhattan Project through the 1980s and must be deliberately and responsibly disposed of to minimize health or environmental risk.

Work on certain areas of the High-Level Waste Vitrification Facility was paused in early 2012 while technical decisions were finalized and other activities were completed. During the pause, construction continued at unaffected areas of the facility and at two other stadium-sized buildings that will analyze, treat, and vitrify additional waste.

To resolve the technical matters, Bechtel strengthened and completed nuclear safety plans, analyses, and procedures; participated in independent reviews; and enhanced quality site-wide.

Bechtel is a leader in environmental cleanup and restoration of former nuclear weapons production sites. The company's experience spans nearly 40 years and includes work at nuclear waste facilities in Washington, Idaho, New Mexico, Tennessee, Nevada, South Carolina, and the United Kingdom.

About Bechtel:

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