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Substantial design and construction progress made at Vit Plant in 2014

Employees achieve best safety performance ever

RICHLAND, Wash. — Resuming engineering work on the High-Level Waste Vitrification Facility and placing a large standby diesel generator were just two of the major accomplishments this year at the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant, also known as the Vit Plant, managed by Bechtel National, Inc.

“Our employees continue to advance design and construction at the Vit Plant while remaining committed to safety and quality,” said Bechtel’s Vit Plant Project Director Peggy McCullough. “We have once again achieved our best safety performance in project history with fewer injuries than ever before and were recertified as a Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program Star site for safety.”

On the design front, Vit Plant employees resumed engineering work on the High-Level Waste Facility after considerable progress was made to resolve the facility’s technical matters. Technicians also began full-scale testing on large, metal vessels similar to those that would be installed in the plant. Results will provide data to make technical decisions about Vit Plant mixing technologies.

Construction accomplishments include placement of the standby diesel generator, which is part of the 20 facilities and systems that compose the infrastructure necessary to support the four main Vit Plant facilities. The generator can supply 2,250 kW of electricity, enough to support 1,800 average American households.

Significant components of the 300-ton melters in the Low-Activity Waste Vitrification Facility were also installed. When operational, the melters will heat the waste and glass-forming materials to 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit before the mixture is poured into stainless steel canisters for permanent storage.

“We are achieving great strides on all fronts—progressing design and construction and making the remaining technical decisions,” McCullough said.

EDITORS: The Vit Plant accomplishments video is available at http://vimeo.com/hanfordvitplant/2014accomplishments

For photos, visit www.hanfordvitplant.com.

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About Bechtel:

Bechtel National Inc. is designing and building the world's largest radioactive waste treatment plant for the U.S. Department of Energy at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington state. The Waste Treatment Plant, also known as the Vit Plant, will use a process called vitrification to solidify the radioactive liquid waste stored in 177 underground tanks. The waste is left over from decades of Cold War-era nuclear weapons production.

Vitrification involves blending the waste with glass-forming materials and heating it to high temperatures. The molten mixture is then poured into stainless steel canisters to cool and solidify. In this glass form, the waste is stable and impervious to the environment, and its radioactivity will dissipate over hundreds to thousands of years.

The Vit Plant will cover 65 acres with four major facilities – Pretreatment, Low-Activity Waste Vitrification, High-Level Waste Vitrification and Analytical Laboratory – as well as operations and maintenance buildings, utilities, other support facilities and office space.