



News Release

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Fine for tank farm spill benefits workers & hazardous response team

RICHLAND, WA – The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of River Protection (USDOE) have reached agreement on settling two violations of the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order (also known as the Tri-Party Agreement or TPA).

The violations involved a tank waste spill by contractor, CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. (CHG). The spill occurred in the S-Tank Farm on the Hanford Site in eastern Washington on July 27, 2007.

Jane Hedges, Ecology's nuclear waste program manager, said flaws in the initial tank pump system design and faulty operational decisions resulted in a spill of very dangerous tank waste and put the workers in grave danger to exposure of tank waste and vapors.

Ecology issued stipulated penalties against USDOE under the TPA, based on two violations of work requirements. The first involved inadequate engineering design related to the water backflow equipment. The second involved inadequate engineering reviews.

In consideration of USDOE and CHG cooperation in completing a thorough investigation of the tank waste spill, and promptly adopting initial corrective actions to prevent future accidents, Ecology has agreed to hold \$250,000 of the \$500,000 penalty in suspension pending completion of:

- Agreed-to list of further corrective actions.
- One year and 360 hours of active retrieval operations, without any similar incidents.

After completion of these conditions and approval by Ecology, USDOE won't be required to pay the suspended portion of the penalty.

Under the terms of the agreement, USDOE and CHG will perform two Supplemental Environmental Projects which will directly benefit the Hanford environment, and pay a

penalty of \$50,000. CHG will replace breather filters in the TY single-shell tank (SST) system and provide emergency equipment for the Tri-County Hazardous Materials Response Team.

Under the first part of the Supplemental Environmental Project, at least \$200,000 will be spent to replace large air filters mounted on vent pipes coming out of the top of the SSTs. The existing filters require annual testing and put a large crew of workers at risk of exposure when filters are changed. The new filters are lighter, fully encased and require no testing. Replacing these filters requires fewer workers and does not require the filter material to be removed from its housing, significantly reducing the potential for employee exposure to tank farm hazards. USDOE plans to replace 12 filters in the TY Tank Farm.

Ron Skinnerland, Ecology's waste management section manager, said: "Reducing worker exposure to mixed hazardous waste continues to be a top priority for Ecology. We are hopeful these new filters will reduce the risks faced by the workforce especially the risk of unnecessary exposures to chemical and radiation hazards."

Under the second part of the Supplemental Environmental Project, CHG will give emergency equipment valued at \$100,000 to the Tri-County Hazardous Materials Response Team. This team operates within Benton, Franklin, Yakima and Walla Walla counties under a mutual aid pact, and responds to any call for aid within Washington.

The equipment includes a tow vehicle, generators, scene lighting, respiratory protection, and drum and pipe patching kits.

Hedges said, "This new equipment will help reduce risk to our surrounding communities by improving the teams' ability to respond to chemical releases."

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Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Broadcast version:

Washington Department of Ecology and US Department of Energy reached a settlement on two environmental violations imposed by Ecology following a Hanford tank waste spill that occurred July 27, 2007.

Jane Hedges, Ecology's nuclear waste program manager, said flaws in the initial tank pump system design and faulty operational decisions resulted in a spill of very dangerous tank waste. This accident put workers in grave danger due to exposure to tank waste and vapors.

As part of the settlement, USDOE has agreed to replace 12 larger air filters mounted on vent pipes coming out of single-shell tanks in the TY Tank Farm to reduce workers exposure to tank farm hazards. USDOE will also provide emergency equipment to the Tri-County Hazardous Materials Response Team.