

ECA Update: March 4, 2015



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Department of Energy's Contract Management for the National Nuclear Security Administration and Office of Environmental Management
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The Department of Energy (DOE), the largest civilian contracting agency in the federal government, relies primarily on contractors to carry out its diverse missions and operate its laboratories and other facilities. Approximately 90 percent of DOE's budget is spent on contracts and large capital asset projects. We designated DOE's contract management—which includes both contract administration and project management—as a high-risk area in 1990 because DOE's record of inadequate management and oversight of contractors has left the department vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. In January 2009, to recognize progress made by DOE's Office of Science, we narrowed the focus

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Upcoming Events

[SSAB Portsmouth Meeting](#)
March 5

[SSAB Oak Ridge Meeting](#)
March 11

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March 25

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April 15

of its high-risk designation to two DOE program elements—the Office of Environmental Management (EM) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Together, these two programs accounted for almost 63 percent of DOE’s fiscal year 2015 discretionary funding of more than \$26 billion. In February 2013, we further narrowed the focus of the high-risk designation to EM and NNSA’s major contracts and projects, those with an estimated cost of \$750 million or more, to acknowledge progress made in managing projects with an estimated cost of less than \$750 million. Our 2013 assessment found that DOE satisfied 3 of the 5 criteria needed for removal from the High Risk List. This year, we did not observe similar progress in DOE’s management of major projects. EM and NNSA struggled to stay within cost and schedule estimates for most of their major projects.

Nuclear Energy Peer
Exchange, Aiken County
May 2015

Los Alamos Peer
Exchange
July 2015

‘Maintenance issues’ contributed to Y-12 spill

Frank Munger’s Atomic City Underground

March 3, 2015

[LINK](#)

The government’s contractor has completed its investigation of a Dec. 16 chemical spill at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant and plans to resume operations at the Purification Facility “in the near future,” a federal spokesman said in response to questions.

Steven Wyatt, a spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration, confirmed that Consolidated Nuclear Security — the Bechtel-led contractor team that operates the Oak Ridge plant — had completed its investigation of the spill of highly flammable acetonitrile. The spill forced the evacuation of Y-12’s Purification Facility, which produces a classified material known as Fogbank for use in some nuclear weapons — including Trident warheads.

No one was reported to be injured in the spill, and workers at the site were praised for their timely response in limiting the impacts of the accident.

Wyatt said he could not release the investigation report, citing classification restrictions, but he said investigators concluded that “maintenance issues” and “system status awareness” were significant contributors to the spill. He declined to elaborate or say if that meant the equipment was improperly maintained or if the system had not been inspected in accordance with procedures.

“CNS is completing preparations and modifications to safely

resume operations, which should resume in the near future,” Wyatt said via email.

The review and response to the accident have apparently taken longer than expected.

In an interview two days after the Dec. 16 spill, CNS President Jim Haynes said Y-12 workers “responded brilliantly” to the situation and said he expected restart of the Purification Facility within a matter of days.

“I think we’re talking about days, not weeks or months or something like that,” Haynes said.

The NNSA has confirmed that the Purification Facility is used to produce the secret material known as Fogbank, but Wyatt would not say if Fogbank processing is the only operation that takes place inside the facility.

“The Purification Facility at Y-12 is used to produce Fogbank, a material associated with the weapon program. We will not elaborate further on this facility or the material produced,” he said.

Defense agency visited Yucca, says no intention to use site

Las Vegas Review-Journal

March 2, 2015

[LINK](#)

WASHINGTON – Officials from a Pentagon agency toured the Yucca Mountain’s tunnels last month but do not intend to work at the Nevada site, a spokesman said Monday.

A small group from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency visited Yucca on Feb. 17, confirmed Daniel Gaffney, the agency’s spokesman. He described it as a one-time deal.

“(O)fficials did tour the facility, just as they tour many (Energy Department) facilities, but it was not with the intent to conduct work at the Yucca Mountain site,” Gaffney said.

The agency, based at Fort Belvoir, Va., is charged with developing strategies in response to threats from weapons of mass destruction. It has conducted exercises on portions of the sprawling Nevada National Security Site adjacent to Yucca Mountain.

Gaffney said the tour was one of the agency's periodic visits to underground facilities as it builds understanding of hard targets where deadly weapons might be produced and stored.

The defining feature of Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, is the 5-mile exploratory tunnel and numerous alcoves the Energy Department carved during decades of study to determine whether the site could safely store high-level nuclear waste. The site has been dormant since the program was terminated in 2010.

The site visit was reported by the trade publication IHS The Energy Daily. It reported the tour was taken by six officials from the Consequence Management Division, which develops tactics to respond to worst-case scenarios of a nuclear, chemical or biological weapons attack.

Citing unnamed sources, Energy Daily reported the agency was searching for suitable tunnels to perform "catastrophe scenarios" that could include studying train derailment effects during a calamity.

"The agency has never had any plans to do anything" at Yucca Mountain, Gaffney said. "And no plans testing anything in the future."

"Our guys like to look at as many underground facilities as they can, to gain a better understanding of their general nature, strengths, weaknesses, how things are constructed," he said. The tour "was not investigative or preliminary into looking at anything."

If there was something specific it was trying to learn from touring Yucca, it likely would be classified, he said.

Republican leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee sent a letter Wednesday to Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz seeking details of interactions between the department and the agency. They sought confirmation that "planning, operations or other activity" at the site have been discontinued.

Pro-Yucca lawmakers say Congress approved the Nevada site for nuclear waste disposal, and any other uses could threaten its ability to be licensed as a repository, and could possibly be illegal.

But five years after the program was terminated, the visit by

military representatives has focused new attention on what if any uses might be found for the site if not nuclear waste.

The Energy Department on Monday declined to comment on the visit or discuss reports involving alternative uses of Yucca Mountain.

It could not be determined whether there were costs incurred to open the Yucca site for the visit. In 2011, the department cited costs of about \$15,000 to mitigate radon in the tunnels and to make other accommodations for a visiting congressional delegation.

Hanford Tour Registration Begins March 9

KVEWTV.com

March 2, 2015

[LINK](#)

DOE PRESS RELEASE

RICHLAND, Wash. – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) will open online registration for both of its 2015 public tour programs on March 9 at 9 a.m. through the Hanford Site’s webpage at www.hanford.gov.

The Hanford Site public tours focus on environmental cleanup, while the B Reactor tours focus on Hanford’s role in the top-secret Manhattan Project during World War II.

All tours begin and end at the B Reactor Tour Headquarters at 2000 Logston Blvd. in Richland off Hwy. 240. Tours last approximately 4.5 hours. There is no cost to participate.

Hanford Site Cleanup Tours

This driving tour of the site includes stops at the Cold Test Facility, Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility, 200-West Area Groundwater Pump and Treat facility, and the Waste Treatment Plant. Tours also include a stop at the historic B Reactor.

Throughout the drive across the site, guests will learn about the site – from inception, through its plutonium production era during World War II and the Cold War, and the progress of today’s cleanup mission. For these tours, participants must be U.S. citizens and at least 18 years of age. All tour slots are filled on a first-come, first-served basis through the online registration system at www.hanford.gov.

Hanford Site Cleanup Tour Dates and Times:

April 21 and 22; May 5, 6, 19, and 21; June 2, 3, 4, 16, and 17;
July 28, 29, and 30; August 11, 12, 13, 25, 26, and 27
Tours depart at 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. on all tour days.

B Reactor/Hanford History Tours

The tours provide visitors with both guided tour and exploration time at the B Reactor National Historic Landmark, and immerse visitors in the history of the Hanford Site prior to and during World War II. Visitors will see the front face of the reactor, fan ventilation rooms, water valve pit, water process laboratories, accumulator room, the reactor's control room and the base of the front face stairway which gives a better view of the reactor's cooling water risers and cross-header valves. B Reactor is set to become part of the new Manhattan Project National Historical Park designated by Congress in 2014.

Visitors return to Richland via the Hanford Site river road. The bus will pass the old town sites of White Bluffs and Hanford, where most of the original residents of this area lived prior to World War II. Historic facilities including the old Hanford High School and White Bluffs Bank may also become part of the new National Park site at Hanford.

Tour slots are available on a first-come, first-served basis through an online registration system at <http://manhattanprojectreactor.hanford.gov/>, or by calling 509-376-1647 or stopping by the B Reactor Tour Headquarters.

Families with children above the age of 12 are invited to sign up for the tour slots. Middle school and high school class tours can be arranged by calling the B Reactor Tour Headquarters at 509-376-1647. A limited number of group tours are also available this year. Visitors are encouraged to bring cameras to the B Reactor. Citizens from all countries are welcome on the Manhattan Project B Reactor tours.

B Reactor Tour Dates and Times:

April 7, 8, 11, 18, 28, and 29; May 2, 12, 13, 16, 27, 28, and 30;
June 9, 10, 11, 13, 23, 24, 25,
27, and 30; July 1, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, and 25; August 3, 4, 5, 8, 17,
18, 19, 22, and 31;
September 1, 2, 5, 15, 16, 19, 29, and 30.

B Reactor tours depart each tour day at 8:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Since DOE began its B Reactor public access program in 2009, about 50,000 visitors from all 50 states and more than 70 countries have visited the B Reactor National Historic Landmark at Hanford.

Larry Kelly, manager of DOE Oak Ridge Office, dies

Oak Ridge Today

February 28, 2015

[LINK](#)

Larry Kelly, manager of the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Office since July 2012, has died.

“Words cannot describe the sadness we feel with the passing of Larry,” said ORO Deputy Manager Kevin Hall. “The loss of our leader is heavy on our hearts, but it is the loss of a friend that leaves an emptiness that will be difficult to endure. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Rubenia, and daughter, Kristyn. Anyone who spent time with him knew the admiration he had in his wife, and the pride he took in his daughter.

“During his tenure, I was always impressed with Larry’s emphasis on our people and our mission. It was the driving force behind all of his decisions, and it led to a workforce that cared for him very deeply. He made a lasting impact on the Oak Ridge Office and each one of us personally.”

Before he became DOE-ORO manager, Kelly served as the acting deputy manager and acting manager. He joined the ranks of the federal government’s highest level, the Senior Executive Service, in 2008, serving as the assistant manager of ORO’s Environment, Safety, and Health program. In this capacity, he supported DOE’s mission and programs in safety, health, quality assurance, and environmental protection at the agency’s sites in Oak Ridge and nationally.

Prior to joining DOE in 1990, he worked with the Tennessee Valley Authority for nine years, where he supported the design, construction, and operation of commercial nuclear power plants. He also worked for International Paper Company as an environmental engineer at the Natchez Mill.

A native of Oxford, Mississippi, Larry received his bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from the University of Mississippi

and his master's degree from the University of Tennessee.

In April 2014, Ole Miss selected Larry for its 2014 Engineer of Distinction Award. It is the highest award given by the School of Engineering to recognize the professional accomplishment of a graduate who has reached a pinnacle in their career.

DOE reporter Frank Munger, who writes for the Knoxville News Sentinel, reported that Kelly was 58 and battled cancer for two years.

Wilson advocates for SRS funding in congressional testimony

Aiken Standard

February 27, 2015

[LINK](#)

U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., advocated for adequate funding for missions at the Savannah River Site and Fort Jackson on Wednesday during his testimony in front of the House Budget Committee.

Given five minutes, the South Carolina Republican applauded President Barack Obama's budget proposal for the site's Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, or MOX.

The proposal is the same as the current funding level of \$345 million and is being used for construction, a difference in Obama's fiscal year 2015 request that sought to freeze construction and find cheaper alternatives.

"This facility is our country's only means to honor the U.S.-Russia Plutonium Disposition Agreement," Wilson said. "Without this facility, we will default on our nonproliferation agreement with Russia to dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons grade plutonium and the material that could be reprocessed into green fuel for reactors."

In addition to MOX, Wilson also spoke about adequate funding levels for missions at H Canyon – the only hardened nuclear chemical separations plant still operating in the country – and missions at the Savannah River National Lab and the site's liquid waste missions.

The 2016 request for spent nuclear fuel stabilization and disposition at SRS, which includes some H Canyon activities, is

\$34.4 million – a decrease of \$8.7 million from current funding levels.

Wilson also advocated for Fort Jackson, which might lose another major battle to defense sequestration.

Reports surfaced last year that if cuts aren't appealed by 2016, Fort Jackson could lose up to 3,100 jobs.

“Training installations like Fort Jackson are going to suffer significantly during this downsizing as the base sees fewer recruits entering the service and going through initial entry training at a time when threats are spreading to American families,” Wilson added.

Another dramatic take on the Manhattan Project

Albuquerque Journal

February 27, 2015

[LINK](#)

Cast members of the British play “Oppenheimer” watch the explosion of an atomic bomb. (Photo by Keith Pattison/Courtesy Royal Shakespeare Company)

Fans of the “Manhattan” television series have something else to check out while waiting for the show’s second season (filmed in and around Santa Fe, and set to hit cable TV in April).

All it takes is a quick flight to London.

There’s a new play about the scientific leader of the Manhattan Project called “Oppenheimer” that’s been wowing the critics across the pond. It’s being staged by no less than the Royal Shakespeare Company, in no less than Stratford-upon-Avon, birthplace of the bard himself.

In the play by Tom Morton-Smith, according to an Associated Press report, “the race to build the bomb mingles with the private lives of the scientists, who let off steam at parties fueled by punch made from lab alcohol” – which makes “Oppenheimer” sound a lot like “Manhattan.”

“There was a huge number of births at Los Alamos,” adds actor John Hefferman, who portrays J. Robert Oppenheimer in the play, “because there wasn’t much else by way of entertainment.”

But the play is a serious take on the Oppenheimer story. Some reviewers even use the word Shakespearian to describe how it lays out the scientist's complicated life and internal turmoil.

A brief scene available on YouTube has Oppenheimer tormented over whether he'll see the first atomic bomb painted in American stars and stripes floating down the Hudson River, or with a swastika hanging over the Upper West Side.

The Guardian's five-star review said "Oppenheimer" shows its main character as a tragic hero who had to live with the moral consequences of his scientific success.

Most articles or reviews can't resist making mention of Oppenheimer's famous citation, from the Bhagavad Gita Hindu scripture, after he saw the first A-bomb test explosion in southern New Mexico – "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds," used in the play's closing soliloquy.

Variety has some reservations about the play in an otherwise generally positive review.

Morton-Smith, rather than honing in on Oppenheimer, "throws more and more material into the mix," the review says.

"We hear from the pilot about the take-off for Japan; from the scientist on the ground afterwards, measuring the 'fatty stains collecting ash and dust'; even – bizarrely – from the bomb itself, Little Boy (played by a child)."

Stratford-upon-Avon's newspaper, the Herald, says the play includes "truly revelatory" scenes explaining the science of the Manhattan Project, with the stage as "a giant chalkboard on which seeming armies of boffins scribble mathematical formulae."

"Theoretical physics is explained with dazzling clarity, with neon-lit diagrams flitting about," the Herald's piece says. "At one point, the chain reaction that follows when a neutron splits an atom is illustrated by a tag team of physicists who come over like wild-eyed magicians, conjuring impossible spells, building an unimaginable dream."

The play is nearing the end of its run (on March 7), so there's not much time left to hop a plane to the U.K. and see it.

In any case, it seems inevitable that “Oppeneheimer” will be staged here in northern New Mexico at some point. Or how about one of those television links like The Lensic uses for operas from The Met, bringing us the show straight from Stratford-upon-Avon?

Then we could see how “Oppenheimer” stacks up in the growing list of works of art with Los Alamos/Manhattan Project themes, which, in addition to the “Manhattan” series, includes the film noir classic “Kiss Me Deadly” (where the dingus everyone wants to find turns out to be nothing romantic like a Maltese falcon, but is instead a paranoia-inspired box of radionuclides from Los Alamos, all ready to go critical); the punk rock movie “Repo Man” (the bad stuff from the lab is in a car trunk this time); and the bizarre ongoing comic book series called “The Manhattan Projects,” in which making an atomic bomb during World War II is only a cover story for weirder stuff, and Oppenheimer has been consumed and replaced by his evil twin brother (come to think of it, a pretty good idea for a movie, too).