

## ECA Update: August 11, 2015



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#### **EM Selects Ralph Holland to Lead Consolidated Business Center**

DOE EM

August 10, 2015

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – EM has named Ralph Holland director of the Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center (EMCBC) in Cincinnati.

Holland has served in various contracting, supervisory, and management positions within DOE over the last 20 years, most recently as deputy director of EMCBC, which provides technical and business services across the EM complex.

"Ralph has consistently displayed excellent leadership throughout his career at DOE," EM Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Whitney said. "I am pleased he is now serving in this important role at a center that provides critical support to EM's mission."

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### Events of Interest

[Oak Ridge EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

August 22, 2015

[Paducah EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

August 27, 2015

[Hanford EM SSAB](#)

[Meeting](#)

September 9-10

[DOE National](#)

As EMCBC's deputy director, Holland was responsible for leadership, management and oversight of approximately 175 federal staff that support 15 DOE sites with an annual budget of more than \$1 billion.

In addition to line management responsibility for EM's small sites, EMCBC provides consolidated business services to EM in the areas of financial management, cost estimating, project management, human resources, contracting and acquisitions, intergovernmental communications, legal services, property and records management, and technical services.

Holland has applied his business and managerial leadership to the development and implementation of initiatives in the areas of strategic sourcing, process improvement in support of the Department's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Program, and establishment of the field component of the EM Acquisition Center.

Prior to joining the Department, Holland served in supervisory and managerial positions with the Defense Logistics Agency, the U.S. combat logistics support agency. There, he held acquisition responsibility for a broad range of goods and services, including weapons systems components, research and development, and construction.

Holland holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in management from Antioch University and an unlimited warrant as a U.S. contracting officer. He is certified as a Level III Acquisition Professional.

### **Flammable gas uptick puts Savannah River Site waste facility in outage**

The Aiken Standard

August 7, 2015

[LINK](#)

The Defense Waste Processing Facility at the Savannah River Site is in an outage due to an increase in flammable gas levels, but the issue caused no injuries and reportedly will not impact current tank closure work.

The outage began in April, and officials are hoping to have the facility up and running again this fall or winter, but have not yet set a date.

## **Cleanup Workshop**

**September 29th-30th,  
2015**

*Washington, D.C.*

The facility, also known as DWPF, is a key part of the system for processing and immobilizing the high-level waste stored at the SRS tank farms. Workers transfer most of the radioactive waste to the facility where the waste is chemically processed.

Since 1996, the Department of Energy has produced about 4,000 canisters of vitrified waste and expects to produce about 4,600 more canisters over the remaining lifetime of the processing facility.

The facility is not producing canisters due to technical issues and is not expected to pour canisters for the rest of the fiscal year, according to the Department of Energy.

The Energy Department and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, an independent group within the executive branch that provides recommendations on DOE safety issues, reported the processing facility is in an outage due to antifoam issues.

Antifoam has traditionally been added to slow down foaming during the boiling of waste sludge and to prevent carry-over of radionuclides during processing. But in using the antifoam, Savannah River Remediation, the site's liquid waste contractor, learned that as the antifoam chemical degrades, its byproducts can be flammable.

“It was realized that the antifoam can degrade into flammable byproducts even at temperatures well below those in the melter, potentially impacting the flammability of process vessels upstream of the melter,” said Dean Campbell, a spokesman for the contractor.

Other problems outlined by the safety board in relation to the processing facility include issues with specific administrative control implementation and safety analysis assumptions.

Issues were communicated to DOE, and Jessie Roberson, the vice chairman of the safety board, requested in a letter to SRS manager Jack Craig that a report be produced within 90 days that discusses solutions on issues surrounding the processing facility.

Campbell added that current work is expected to stay on schedule. Tank 16 is being filled with grout while Tank 12, the next tank in the closure process, is on schedule to meet the May 30, 2016, deadline for operational closure.

“Savannah River Remediation is working expeditiously to resolve these issues and resume safe operations of DWPF. Impacts to the production schedule will be determined when the facility is operational, but no long-term impacts are anticipated,” Campbell said.

The letter and report from DNFSB is [here](#).

**Katie Tubb: Let nuclear industry, not bureaucracy, manage spent fuel**

[The Washington Times](#)

August 10, 2015

By law, the Department of Energy is supposed to collect spent nuclear fuel and deposit it at Nevada’s Yucca Mountain. Nuclear power customers in 33 states have paid billions of dollars into a federal fund to finance this service. Yet the DOE has never collected a single ounce of spent fuel. Indeed, the Yucca Mountain facility still isn’t open for business.

Federal courts have ruled the DOE is in partial breach of contract for not handling the waste — and that’s costing taxpayers, too. The federal government has already paid out \$4.5 billion in legal settlements and could be liable for as much as another \$50 billion (the “low” estimate is still \$22 billion). Meanwhile, the spent fuel continues to pile up — growing by some 2,000 metric tons per year — awaiting safe disposal.

There’s no denying that this is a huge problem. Which is why senators from both sides of the aisle are working together to find a solution. Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, and Democratic Sens. Maria Cantwell of Washington and Dianne Feinstein of California have hammered out a proposal to relieve DOE of its nuclear waste management responsibilities.

Unfortunately, they would transfer that responsibility to a new federal bureaucracy: the Nuclear Waste Administration. The intention — to rebuild trust between the federal government and both the American people and nuclear power industry — is good. But to shift responsibility from one federal agency to another is about as promising as moving loose change from one holey pocket to another.

The senators’ Nuclear Waste Administration Act fails on another

front as well. The legislation could delay a permanent solution to nuclear waste management for at least another 30 years. Instead, the bill would authorize construction of one or two interim storage facilities. This represents no progress whatsoever. When the Energy Department never showed up to collect waste, nuclear power plants began storing waste safely in de facto interim storage facilities.

Meanwhile, the Nuclear Waste Administration Act calls for a permanent disposal site just like the one at Yucca Mountain — three decades from now — ignoring the fact that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has given the unfinished Yucca Mountain permit a clean bill of health.

The act essentially would force nuclear power companies and their customers to pay for the facility they've already paid for — and never got — all over again.

The Nuclear Waste Administration Act really fixes only one problem: It would stop the lawsuits against the DOE for failing to collect waste from nuclear power plants. That's assuming, of course, that the new agency actually picks up the waste.

But America needs a bigger, better solution.

Here's an idea: What if the nuclear industry were allowed to manage its own spent fuel? Nuclear power plants do this quite successfully in other countries. And let's not forget that the industry has safely built and operated nuclear power plants in this country for decades. Certainly the nuclear industry is capable of managing spent fuel under health and safety guidelines established by a regulator such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

By removing the government as the primary manager, the entire fuel cycle — from fuel development to power generation to waste management — could be opened up to innovation. Nuclear utilities would have incentives to invest in different power plant designs or fuels that produce easier-to-manage waste. Some could even be powered by spent nuclear fuel, for instance. This likely would lead to lower utility prices over time, as utilities make the most economic choices suited to their situations. For example, placing spent fuel directly in a repository might be more cost-effective for some utilities, while others might find interim storage or another process more economical.

Putting commercial nuclear waste producers in control of spent

fuel management might not just turn a problem into a solution; it might transform that problem into an opportunity to develop newer, safer and less-expensive energy technologies.

### **Report on Modernizing the Nuclear Security Enterprise**

[GAO](#)

August 6, 2015

In a report released on August 6, the Government Accountability Office recommended NNSA improve the transparency of future budget materials by identifying potential risks to the achievement of program goals if budget estimates are lower than plans suggest are necessary. NNSA's 25-year budget estimates for modernizing the nuclear security enterprise in its 2015 budget materials total \$293.4 billion, an increase of \$17.6 billion compared to 2014. GAO found that some budget estimates changed dramatically, for example the stockpile budget estimates to refurbish nuclear weapons through life extension programs decreased by 31 percent while infrastructure estimates increased by 71 percent. GAO reported that infrastructure budget estimates are not adequate to address its reported \$3.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog, and the backlog will continue to grow. The full report can be found in the link above.

### **Subcontract Administration at Selected Department of Energy Management and Operating Contractors**

DOE IG

July 31, 2015

[LINK](#)

This week, the DOE Inspector General released a report on subcontract administration among selected management (M&O) contractors. The audit was initiated to determine whether contractors were administering their subcontracts in accordance with DOE regulations. DOE reviewed the National Nuclear Security Administration's Kansas City Plant (Kansas City). In fiscal year (FY) 2013, Kansas City had a total of 18,026 subcontracts worth almost \$241 million, and the Office of Science's Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (Jefferson Lab), a facility that had a total of 1,743 subcontracts in FY 2013 with a value of almost \$152 million.

The IG found no evidence that Kansas City and Jefferson Lab had not administered the subcontracts substantially in accordance with

established policies and procedures and contract terms. They did, however, observe that a certain class of subcontracts had been noncompetitively awarded. Specifically, the audit found that Kansas City awarded 8 of the 47 subcontracts we reviewed, or \$10.2 million of \$33.7 million in subcontracts, on a sole-source basis without specific justification. The full report can be found [here](#).

