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New safety regulations at WIPP

Current-Argus

June 3, 2016

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CARLSBAD — At a town hall meeting Tuesday, WIPP representatives gave an in-depth look at their revised Documented Safety Analysis (DSA), which is supposed to help prevent incidents such as the 2014 salt truck fire and airborne radioactive contamination.

"With the extra layers and all the new controls we've put in, I can say it's not going to happen again," said Jeff Carswell, Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) nuclear safety senior technical adviser, at the meeting.

The regulations of the DSA, which analyzes ways in which the plant can run safely, was completed on May 29. Also included in the DSA were risk assessment evaluations to determine potential accidents and how the company can avoid and mitigate them.

Carswell said to improve the company's safety process, they analyzed 47 plausible events and created regulations to prevent each one.

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Third Annual Intermountain Energy Summit
Idaho Falls, ID
[Visit website](#)

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Save the Date: ECA Peer Exchange
Contact Ivana Brancaccio at ivana@energyca.org
for more information

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14-15

2016 National Cleanup Workshop
Hilton Alexandria Mark Center
Alexandria, VA
Visit cleanupworkshop.com

November 2016

Changes to operations for safety under the DSA include improving the ventilation system and limiting the number of liquid fueled vehicles allowed near the waste and installing more fire suppression equipment.

"If we operate the facility while following our safety basis we will always be protecting the worker and the public from any event that could happen at the facility," said Carswell.

However, Norbert Rempe, a former geologist at WIPP, commented during the town meeting that the problems with the 2014 events did not lie with the actual fire or radiological release, but rather the company's response to them.

He said the revisions contained too much focus on nuclear safety and not enough emphasis on non-nuclear events. A 2014 accident investigation report by the Department of Energy determined that inconsistencies in fire response training lead to an "ineffective response to the salt haul truck fire."

"The mistaken erroneous reaction to the fire. The nuclear mitigation response to a non-nuclear event, the screwing around with the ventilation, to go into the filtration," Rempe said.

In response, Carswell said while the DSA does mainly focus on nuclear events, they did also take other problems into account when creating the DSA. He cited their investigation into volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the underground as an example.

"As a nuclear facility that also happens to be a mine, they have to meet all of our nuclear requirements and then they have to meet all of the mine safety requirements," Carswell said.

"There are probably times when one trumps the other. And in that case we did look at both and we went with the safety that was more conservative."

16-18

Save the Date: 2016
Intergovernmental Meeting
New Orleans, LA

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Carswell explained later in the meeting that if the current DSA regulations were in place during 2014, trucks would have to undergo a thorough examination prior to their departure and the fire suppression systems would have to be verified. The new regulations also require attendants to walk with the trucks in a manner similar to "traffic cops."

Cold Operations also began on June 1, according to a WIPP news release. The eight-week process involves performing operations with simulated waste containers and improving how workers respond to different situations.

The town hall meeting can be viewed in-full at <http://livestream.com/rrv/events/5523688>.

Court upholds storage of nuclear waste at power plants, rebuffing states

The Hill

June 3, 2016

[LINK](#)

A federal appeals court Friday rejected a plea from four liberal states to overturn a regulation allowing long-term storage of spent nuclear fuel at power plants.

The District of Columbia Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) followed all relevant laws and standards when it wrote its 2014 regulation and an associated environmental impact statement.

The rule concluded that spent fuel rods can be stored safely at nuclear power plants indefinitely, which may be necessary if the United States never builds the long-delayed Yucca Mountain waste repository.

"Because we hold that the NRC did not engage in arbitrary or capricious decision-making, we deny the petitions for review," a three-judge panel of the court wrote in its decision.

The ruling means that NRC can continue to give nuclear plants, both active and inactive, permission to store their spent fuel rods on-site for as long as they need to.

The attorneys general of New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut filed the lawsuit shortly after the NRC voted to make its regulation and environmental impact statement final.

“The NRC’s approach is wrong and illegal, and I will continue to fight to ensure that our communities receive the full and detailed accounting of the risks of long-term, on-site nuclear waste storage that they deserve,” New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said at the time.

The Natural Resources Defense Council joined to support the states.

The same court overturned the nuclear agency's previous spent fuel storage regulation in 2012, ruling that the NRC did not properly consider the safety of storage over the long term, like leaks in storage pools or fires. That case, brought by a similar group to the more recent one, prompted the agency to redo its regulation.

But the NRC’s second attempt at resolving the problem appears to have worked.

“We acknowledge the political discord surrounding our nation’s evolving nuclear energy policy. But the role of Article III courts in this debate is circumscribed,” the judges wrote.

“To the extent that the petitioners disagree with the NRC’s current policy for the continued storage of spent nuclear fuel, their concerns should be directed to Congress.”

Our Voice: New national park requires donations

Tri-City Herald

June 5, 2016

[LINK](#)

Establishing the Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Hanford is one of the most exciting endeavors our community has on the horizon.

Once it opens, national park officials estimate it initially will draw 100,000 tourists annually. That means we have to be sure the attraction is worth the trip for those traveling to see it.

Like all efforts such as this, in addition to enthusiasm, commitment and planning, it will take a considerable amount of money to do it right.

That's where Tri-Citians, corporations in the community and others interested in the historical park can make a difference right away.

The Benton-Franklin River Heritage Foundation has been set up to take donations for the park until an official "friends of the park" group is established. The organization is administered by Visit Tri-Cities.

Kris Watkins, Visit Tri-Cities' president and CEO, said 100 percent of any contribution made will go toward funding the new park because no administration fees are being charged.

The Benton-Franklin River Heritage Foundation was set up in 2002 as an interim fundraising tool to incubate projects. It has been used in the past to help start the Reach center and for Lewis and Clark bicentennial events.

Watkins said the "friends group" will be created after a permanent superintendent is named for the park. Until then, the foundation is providing a way to get some cash flowing now.

All along in the park's planning process, it was expected that the community would contribute to it financially. Tracy Atkins, interim superintendent for the project, said national parks rely on a combination of federal money, fees and philanthropy.

Of course the fees can't be collected yet, but it will help if donations start accruing now.

When a lot of people think about national parks, they think of unique land formations and waterfalls. But the U.S. National Park Service also oversees many parks and monuments that focus on preserving history.

The Whitman Mission near Walla Walla, for example, is operated by the National Park Service and provides an educational opportunity for travelers and hundreds of schoolchildren on field trips.

We have that similar potential for the park at Hanford. The creation of the nuclear bomb is controversial and surrounded by mixed emotions — and understandably so.

But the new park provides an opportunity to showcase the scientific accomplishments, the sacrifice and the historical context along with the devastating consequences caused by the development of the nuclear age.

So far, it appears those involved in the park's creation are taking great care to try and accurately tell the story behind one of the greatest engineering achievements in the history of our country, and how it changed the world. A Scholars Forum of experts already has met to discuss initial plans for the massive project.

At Hanford, the B Reactor likely will be the focal point of the national park. The world's first full-scale plutonium production reactor has been designated as a National Historic Landmark and public tours are already available there.

But the national park will be more than a tour of B Reactor. It will tell the story of science, secrecy, the workers and their lives, the decision to use the bomb, the consequences of that decision and peace efforts now.

And those are just a few talking points. There are so many more.

This is an important project for our community and for our nation's history. It will take financial commitment to do it right, and we need to step up and help.

Anyone who wants to make a tax-deductible donation for the historical park can mail or deliver it to Visit Tri-Cities, Attn: Hanford Unit Fund, 7130 Grandridge Blvd., Suite B, Kennewick, WA 99336.

Public/private partnerships subject of TVC Summit

Herald-Citizen

June 3, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Tennessee Valley Corridor features a number of private industries that exhibit leadership in science, national security, space, environmental clean up and advanced manufacturing, a lot of things that require partnerships with the public sector.

That was the subject of the final day of the TVC's national summit, held at Tennessee Technological University.

"These are challenging times nationally and internationally," Tennessee's Third District Congressman Chuck Fleischmann said. "And it's because of that we need to have regional cooperation."

A few of the high tech industries highlighted during the final day include the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Bechtel Nuclear, Security and Environmental, UCOR, and the Nuclear Energy Institute.

Tom Rogers, director of industrial partnerships and economic development with ORNL, spoke about the projects the lab is involved in, including the development of the second neutron science and imaging target station, which costs \$1 billion over the next five years, and the development of high performance computing.

“We’re leveraging our research and development for economic development,” he said. “We are looking at the geographic concentrations of interconnected companies in a certain field.”

John Howanitz, senior vice president of Bechtel Nuclear, Security and Environmental, spoke about the different projects that company is involved in — domestically and internationally.

“The company began more than 117 years ago and is still family owned and operated,” he said.

As the largest engineering, construction and project management company in the country, the company has four business units: infrastructure, nuclear; defense and security; oil, gas and chemicals; and mining and metals. Howanitz spoke on the nuclear, security and environmental aspect of the company.

“This area consists of nuclear power, government security, cleanup and naval nuclear propulsion work,” Howanitz said. “We’re going to be taking over the operations of Arnold Air Force Base as of July 1.”

The company also oversees the Y-12 National Security Complex and recently completed construction on Watts Bar Unit 2, which was stopped 30 years ago.

Ken Rueter, president and project manager of UCOR, spoke about the cleanup of East Tennessee Technology Park, the former Oak Ridge K-25 site.

“The goal of this cleanup is to turn the property into a private sector industrial park,” Rueter said.

“The \$2.6 billion cleanup effort has many phases, including deactivation and demolition, waste disposition, environmental remediation, surveillance and maintenance, facility design and construction, reindustrialization and historic preservation.”

To summarize the scope of the cleanup, he said that the property entails 100 acres and 6.5 million square feet of facility.

Attendees also heard from Dr. Andy White, director of the University of Tennessee's Aerospace and Defense Business Institute, and Jon Breed, manager, state and federal advocacy of the Nuclear Energy Institute.

For more information, visit www.tennvalleycorridor.org.

Los Alamos Lab looks to recruit young people over 5 years

AP: Hastings Tribune

June 5, 2016

[LINK](#)

As the Los Alamos National Laboratory faces thousands of job openings over the next five years, New Mexico's community colleges are looking at how they can prepare their students for those jobs.

Representatives from the lab and community college presidents met in Santa Fe with U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, a New Mexico Democrat, on Wednesday to figure out how small educational institutions can get their students employed at the lab, The Santa Fe New Mexican reported (<http://bit.ly/1stxLMI>). The majority of the lab's workforce currently comes from out of state.

Lab officials estimate almost 2,500 job vacancies will arise between now and 2020 in positions ranging from nuclear defense to operations as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age.

Kathy Keith, a lab spokeswoman, said the institution isn't just looking for scientists with doctorate degrees. About one-third of current lab employees hold a Ph.D., the same amount as those who hold no degrees, Keith said.

Representatives from Santa Fe Community College, Highlands University, Los Lunas Community College and the University of New Mexico campus in Taos, among others, stressed that science, technology, engineering and math programs at their schools prepare students for the workforce, but that there are still problems.

Many said the K-12 system is not cultivating a love of science in students at a young age. Dr. Sam Minner Jr., president of Highlands University, said the STEM "funnel is not big enough" and that students are being turned away from science careers long before they get to college.

College leaders also said many of their students are academically qualified, but that they can't pass background checks required by the lab. Domingo Sánchez, president of Northern New Mexico College, said addiction and behavioral health issues in the state need to be addressed.

Heinrich said it's important to address the issues now before operating contracts for both Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque go out to bid.

"We are at a transition point because both the Sandia and Los Alamos contracts are going to be bid over the course of the next couple of years," Heinrich said. ". It is an opportunity to hit the reset button and say, 'Here's what we expect, and how are you going to meet that?' "

Great Achievements by INL Cleanup Operations

Clearwater Tribune

By Congressman Mike Simpson

June 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

"This week, nuclear waste cleanup operations at the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory site transitioned to a new federal contractor. I want to express my gratitude to CH2M-Washington Group and BWX Technologies for their

years of service, dedication, and commitment to environmental stewardship at the Idaho site.

“By all accounts, the job of cleaning up decades-old toxic materials – much of it left over from the World War II Manhattan Project – is a difficult task. Yet contrary to popular belief, Idaho’s cleanup contractors have made remarkable progress.

“Guided by strong and determined leaders, the employees working for CH2M-Washington Group have safely dispositioned 3,186 nuclear fuel units, completed 364 shipments of remote-handled transuranic waste, and exhumed enough targeted buried waste to fill 27,000 55-gallon barrels. In total, they have met 99.8 percent of the more than 700 regulatory milestones they were contracted to complete.

“Similarly, BWX Technologies’ workforce has shipped 57,000 cubic meters of above-ground waste out of the state of Idaho, with another 8,000 cubic meters scheduled to be retrieved by the end of this year. These waste shipments will be added to the nearly 800 shipments of waste that are certified and ready to be shipped to New Mexico’s Waste Isolation Pilot Project facility. During BWX Technologies’ tenure in Idaho, waste shipments from Idaho to New Mexico’s repository have accounted for nearly 50 percent of the nation’s waste shipments.

“While continued challenges exist in cleaning up the Idaho site, including the startup of the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit and transferring additional waste to New Mexico’s repository, I’m confident Fluor-Idaho, the new cleanup contractor, is up to the job. I look forward to working closely with them and the Department of Energy to ensure they have the resources necessary to ship the remaining waste out of the state.

“Whether we measure success by the cubic meters of buried or above-ground nuclear waste removed from the desert, the task of transferring spent nuclear fuel from wet to dry storage, the operation of complex and unique machinery, or the demolishing of dozens of aging buildings, it’s clearly evident the leadership and employees at CH2M-Washington Group and BWX Technologies have made real, tangible progress in cleaning up the legacy of nuclear waste in Idaho. I am

astonished at the progress that I have personally witnessed in the amount of waste removed from the site in the last several years. Today, I can say with confidence that the State of Idaho is better because of their commitment and service.”

Reid’s exit will make fighting Yucca Mountain project tougher, ex-governor says

Las Vegas Review-Journal

June 3, 2016

[LINK](#)

Former Nevada Gov. Richard Bryan told a legislative panel on Friday that although the state’s case against Yucca Mountain is strong, keeping the high-level nuclear waste repository at bay will be a challenge with U.S. Sen. Harry Reid’s departure.

Bryan, chairman of the Nevada Commission on Nuclear Projects, said Reid, D-Nev., has succeeded in keeping the high-level nuclear waste dump from getting the funding needed to push it forward during his Senate career, which is ending.

Bryan, who helped initiate Nevada’s opposition to the dump in 1983 while governor, noted that the original plan was to have the repository open in 1998.

“I believe Nevada’s case is stronger today than it has ever been,” Bryan told the Legislature’s Committee on High Level Nuclear Waste.

But efforts continue in Congress to proceed with the project, he said.

“Suffice it to say, it is going to be a challenge,” Bryan said.

There is a new effort in Congress this year to provide funding to proceed on Yucca Mountain. The Fiscal 2017 Energy-Water Appropriations bill, HR 5055, would allot the U.S. Department of Energy \$170 million to continue an application process to license the project as a nuclear storage facility. A similar effort last year failed largely because of Reid’s efforts.

There is no Yucca funding in this year's Senate budget bills.

Members of Nevada's congressional delegation have criticized the latest funding effort.

The Obama administration in 2010 shelved the controversial Yucca Mountain project, which many Nevada political leaders and citizens had opposed, but efforts to revive it never seem to end.

Nye County Commissioner Dan Schinhofen also testified at the meeting. He said he was not advocating for Yucca Mountain, but was asking to let the review process proceed.

"Let's hear the science," he said. "Let the 219 contentions by the state to be heard. We welcome them to be heard. People deserve to hear the science."

Nevada's objections to the project involve everything from the technology proposed to store the waste to transportation concerns.

Bob Halstead, executive director of the state Agency for Nuclear Projects, said the state would likely need \$8 million to \$10 million a year in funding if full licensing proceedings by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission resume.

The agency continues to receive funding to maintain its efforts to participate in the limited licensing process now in progress.

Gov. Brian Sandoval remains opposed to Yucca Mountain.

Bryan said he supports "consent-based" siting of the project, and legislation called the Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act, which would require projects such as Yucca Mountain to receive approval from local governments in affected areas, is being sponsored by members of Nevada's congressional delegation.

Doubling down on energy innovation

The Hill

By Secretary Ernest Moniz

June 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

Last year in Paris, President Obama and 19 other world leaders announced Mission Innovation, an effort to expand the clean energy innovation pipeline by doubling research and development and then turning innovation into transformation. At the same time, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and more than two dozen investors from ten countries pledged to invest significant private capital in clean energy, with the patience needed to introduce new energy technologies into the marketplace at large scale.

Today in San Francisco, I will join energy leaders from Mission Innovation countries and the European Union to announce how we plan to meet our target of doubling clean energy R&D to a total of nearly \$30 billion per year by 2021.

Clean energy innovation is central to reducing the cost of clean energy technologies and in turn rapidly increasing their deployment. These efforts are critical to combating climate change, supporting economic growth, enabling life-changing energy services to the poor and enhancing global energy security.

While the whole world will share the benefits of widespread clean energy use, the United States must also recognize that there is also an element of healthy competition. The nations and businesses that invent clean energy solutions stand to win a large and growing clean energy market share.

The Paris climate agreement commits most of the world's nations to dramatically increased deployment of clean energy over the next fifteen years, simultaneously responding to an environmental imperative and creating a multi-trillion dollar global economic opportunity. For example, India has committed to 100,000 megawatts of solar energy by 2022.

And China is significantly increasing its new nuclear power generation.

Supporting American innovation will position American companies as major players in the global energy technology marketplace. Innovation is a hallmark of American economic leadership, but if we choose not to invest adequately in energy innovation, we will leave the clean energy breakthroughs to others.

That's why the Administration has committed to work with Congress to double our own domestic clean energy R&D funding to \$12.8 billion by 2021. President Obama's budget request for fiscal year 2017 puts us on pace to meet that commitment by investing \$7.7 billion for clean energy R&D.

Every source of clean, low carbon energy must be enabled.

This includes renewables like solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and biomass; efficiency; cutting-edge technologies in nuclear energy, carbon dioxide capture, utilization and underground storage; electricity storage; efficient advanced manufacturing; and 21st century electrical grids that are resilient, integrate renewable and distributed generation, and enable new consumer service delivery. Indeed, carbon-negative technologies could become practical.

This breadth of energy solutions will serve the varied needs, natural resources and innovative capabilities in different regions. President Obama's budget proposes Regional Innovation Partnerships, a new approach that acknowledges the critical role regional energy innovation ecosystems – universities, national laboratories and private research, economic development organizations, investors, industry and labor – will all play in meeting America's clean energy needs.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress have planted the seeds needed to accelerate the pace of energy research and development, but more must be done if we want to capture the benefits of the clean energy economy. The President's 2017 budget proposal to Congress prioritized clean energy innovation within agreed budget constraints.

A few weeks ago, the United States Senate passed their first appropriations bill of the year by a vote of 90-8, which explicitly endorses doubling clean energy research

and development, but includes only modest increases in actual funding. When the House and Senate ultimately send an appropriations bill to the President, it should include significantly more funding for innovation if America hopes to not diminish its lead in this emerging economic revolution.

As I travel across the country to discuss Mission Innovation, from San Francisco to Boston, to the heart of Kentucky coal country, to the agricultural bounty and wind of Iowa, and to the gas fields of Texas and Pennsylvania, the message I hear is clear: America has the workers, the entrepreneurs, the scientists, the engineers, the business people, and the desire to lead the world in energy production and innovation. But we are leaving too much innovative capacity untapped through underinvestment. The American Energy Innovation Council, a group of CEO's of major American companies, has advocated more clean energy investment for many years. The global clean energy commitment means that now is the time to deliver. A bipartisan commitment to American innovation will yield tremendous economic and environmental rewards.
