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Media Contact: Erik Simpson, (208) 390-9464

Investigation into Cause of April 11 Drum Event at INL Site Concludes

IDAHO FALLS, ID – Fluor Idaho LLC, cleanup contractor at the Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory Site, recently completed an investigation into the cause of an April 11 event where four radioactive waste drums experienced excessive pressure and ejected their lids and contents following transuranic waste processing and repackaging. There were no injuries or release of radioactive materials to the environment during the incident. DOE provided oversight of all stages of the investigation.

Based on more than five months of analysis and testing of actual waste material by two independent laboratories, an investigation team has concluded the drum breach incident was caused by a reactive metal with radionuclides heating up after coming into contact with air for the first time in nearly 40 years. This heating up of the reactive metal started a secondary reaction that caused a rapid rise in pressure inside each drum, resulting in the ejection of their lids.

The April 11 event happened at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex's Accelerated Retrieval Project V facility which, since 2012, had safely processed and compliantly repackaged approximately 9,500 drums of sludge-contaminated waste that originated at the former Rocky Flats Plant near Denver, Colorado. Cleanup inside of the ARP V enclosure continues. Crews wearing appropriate personnel protective equipment continue to clean the interior of the facility.

The April 11 event has prompted changes across the Accelerated Retrieval Project. Fluor Idaho revised the waste exhumation and repackaging process with additional controls to mitigate the risk of a similar event. The controls include raking and 24-hour thermal monitoring of sludge waste prior to repackaging. There have been no further incidents. Fluor Idaho and DOE-ID continue to identify and implement additional corrective actions, based on the investigation results, to reinforce safety culture and bolster oversight of waste processes.

The Accelerated Retrieval Project V Causal Analysis report is available at: [ARP V Drum Investigation Report.pdf](#).

Fluor Idaho, LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fluor Corporation with subcontractor partners comprised of CH2M, North Wind Inc., Portage, and Waste Control Specialists. Fluor Idaho manages the Idaho Cleanup Project Core contract at the Department of Energy's Idaho Site located 45 miles west of Idaho Falls. The 5-year, \$1.4 billion project, funded through the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, focuses on early risk reduction and protection of the Snake River Plain Aquifer.

For more information visit the Idaho Cleanup Project on the Web at <https://fluor-idaho.com>