

For Immediate Release

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Idaho's Historic Waste Disposal Site to Close After Receiving Final Shipment

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – Environmental Management (EM) crews recently placed a final radioactive waste shipment into the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site's largest waste disposal area and will begin closing the facility, fulfilling a Department of Energy commitment to the state of Idaho.

Waste Management program personnel with Fluor Idaho, EM's INL Site cleanup contractor, used a 55-ton cask to insert activated metals into a concrete-lined vault within a fenced section of the 97-acre disposal site, known as the Subsurface Disposal Area (SDA).

The metals are structural components of nuclear fuel assemblies that become activated while inside a reactor. Once the fuel assemblies are removed from a reactor, the metal end pieces are removed and disposed.

The SDA began receiving INL-generated radioactive and hazardous waste in 1952. Beginning in 1954, the landfill accepted Cold War weapons waste from the former Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado and other off-site generators.

Due to a policy change in 1970, the SDA stopped receiving transuranic and hazardous waste for disposal but continued to receive boxed low-level radioactive waste and later highly radioactive metal debris in specially designed vaults inside the SDA.

The SDA is unique in the DOE complex in that targeted waste is being removed under a federal regulation while other waste, such as activated metals, has been disposed in the landfill vaults under a separate federal regulation.

The disposal site's first set of 100 concrete vaults were constructed in 1993, and they received their first waste shipment in 1994. The second set of 100 concrete vaults were constructed in 2003, with their first waste shipment in 2008. The last waste shipment to the second set of vaults was completed earlier this month.

Constructed of concrete manhole sections resting on a base and capped with a concrete plug, the vaults are configured in honeycomb arrays. The vaults are surrounded by soil for additional shielding and protection from earthquakes, and the void spaces between the vaults in each array are filled with sand.

Following closure of the disposal site, activated metals will be disposed in a facility managed by INL contractor Battelle Energy Alliance. That disposal facility is located near the Advanced Test Reactor Complex in the central portion of the 890-square-mile INL Site.

Fluor Idaho, LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fluor Corporation with subcontractor partners 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 National Laboratory 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 safely remediating the Idaho National Laboratory site including dispositioning transuranic waste, managing spent nuclear fuel, and treating high-level radioactive waste.

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

Suggested Caption

Environmental Management crews prepare to place the final waste shipment into a vault at the Subsurface Disposal Area at the Idaho National Laboratory Site.