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Additional Idaho Site Facility Enlisted for Sludge Drum Repackaging

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – Cleanup contractor Fluor Idaho and the Department of Energy’s Environmental Management (EM) Program at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site are doubling efforts to treat and repackage drums of radioactive sludge waste generated during the Cold War.

The treatment facility at the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP), which processed the last of AMWTP’s transuranic debris waste last fall, will be used to treat the remaining transuranic sludge waste, joining another INL Site facility where crews are treating similar sludges.

Workers recently began opening drums and treating sludge waste at the AMWTP facility. Crews use robotic arms to open the drums and pour their contents into stainless steel troughs. If liquids are present in the waste, crews add an absorbent before repackaging the material into new waste drums.

The waste being treated was generated during weapons production primarily at the former Rocky Flats Plant near Denver, and was sent to the INL Site until the 1980s. The waste contains oils and radioactive constituents.

AMWTP’s boxlines are suited for this type of work because workers operate the robotic arms from an adjacent room using viewing windows. Boxlines are huge concrete and metal hot cells that protect workers from coming into contact with the waste. The boxlines are under negative pressure with all air filtered through high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to capture contaminants.

“We’ve successfully treated challenging waste streams in these boxlines throughout our mission,” Fluor Idaho Waste Management Director Bryan Breffle said. “It made sense to take advantage of the treatment facility to add additional capabilities to our sludge repackaging work scope while continuing the treatment of similar sludges at the nearby Accelerated Retrieval Project (ARP) VII facility.”

EM and Fluor Idaho began using the ARP VII facility last year to open, treat and repackage sludge wastes. The ARP VII facility, complete with HEPA filtration, was most recently used to reduce the size of large, contaminated legacy waste boxes and debris prior to repackaging them for shipment to permanent disposal facilities.

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 INL 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.

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

Suggested Caption

A view of an Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project boxline where sludge waste is being treated at the Idaho National Laboratory Site.