



A weekly recap of events regarding Hanford's tank vapors

From the desk of Mark Lindholm, WRPS President:

Looking forward to the important work ahead in 2017, I can't help but recognize the progress and accomplishments of our employees at Hanford's tank farms. I credit our success to our highly skilled workers who are committed to keeping themselves and their fellow workers safe, while reducing risks to the public and environment.

Protecting our workers from chemical vapors generated by the tank waste is one of our many challenges. Chemical vapor concerns have been an issue at Hanford for decades. Unfortunately, nuclear safety requirements prevent sealing the tanks; they must be vented or exhausted to the atmosphere. Our efforts are therefore focused on minimizing and controlling vapors in the workspace at the tank farms.

Investing in worker safety & health

The Department of Energy (DOE) has invested \$50 million in the past two years to increase staffing and efficiency of our industrial hygiene program, implement engineering controls to carry vapors away from workers, test technologies for real-time detection and monitoring of vapors, and further evaluate respirators and other protective equipment.

During this time we have hosted several independent organizations to assess our efforts. Their recommendations are incorporated in the next phase of our vapor control plan, which is budgeted at an additional \$65 million for fiscal years 2017 and 2018. As this comprehensive program is being implemented, WRPS is making sure its workers are protected from potential hazards, including chemical vapor exposures.

Looking to the future

Moving forward, WRPS plans to upgrade tank ventilation systems, improve engineering controls to redirect exhauster effluents and modernize the tank farms to shift from hands-on "clipboard" processes to an automated environment. At the same time we are continuing to work with labor union leadership, improving our communications with employees and stakeholders, and implementing scores of recommendations from our workers and some of the nation's top experts in industrial hygiene.

The end goal of these efforts is to improve worker participation in addressing the vapor challenges while providing greater access to information and resources about chemical vapors. An open and transparent approach with our employees, our families and our community will enhance the safe cleanup of Hanford's tank waste.

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Managing Hanford's tank farms is an unprecedented challenge in its size and scope. With one of the most experienced and talented group of workers in the DOE complex, I am confident WRPS is up to the challenge.

News & Notes

- Employees near Hanford's tank farms reported odors in two separate events last week. On Jan. 25, workers reported [odors 200 yards east of AP Farm](#). On Jan. 26, odors were reported [inside a facility west of AZ Farm](#). Air samples collected and analyzed for chemicals at both locations were at or below background levels.
- An [article in the Tri-City Herald](#) highlights a joint motion to delay vapors litigation from October 2017 to March 2018, allowing the parties to pursue mediation. The judge has yet to rule on the motion.

Web Postings

- The [Office of Enterprise Assessment issued its progress report and subsequent recommendations](#) regarding WRPS' progress on the Tank Vapor Assessment Team actions. WRPS is evaluating the report and will use the results to improve future work. The full report is available [here](#).
- Several tools were posted on the [Employee Resources page](#), including the following items:
 - [Workers' Compensation 101](#) – explanation of the process, important points of contact
 - [Workflow Diagram for L&I Compensation](#) – an overview of roles and responsibilities
 - Updated link to the [Penser Workers' Compensation Claims](#) contract
- [AY-102 retrieval summary](#) presented to the Chemical Vapors Solutions Team (CVST) on Jan. 25

Opportunities for Employee Engagement

- The next CVST meeting is Feb. 8 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the 2704 building, room G206. Meetings are open to all employees. Please coordinate attendance with your supervisor.
- The CVST communications subcommittee will meet Monday, Feb. 6 from 3 to 4 p.m. at the 2704 building, room B226. Please join the group as we identify topics to share with workers.

Mark