

# Fiscal Year 2017

## Chemical Vapors Communication Activities

Quarterly Report #2  
*January – March 2017*



washington **river**  
**protection solutions**

*An AECOM-led company with Atkins and AREVA*



## Introduction

Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) is committed to the timely and transparent release of information related to chemical vapors in the Hanford tank farms. The information in this report represents an accounting of WRPS' efforts to increase engagement with the workforce and stakeholders on the chemical vapors issue.

In support of furthering Department of Energy (DOE) mission goals, WRPS has and will continue to pursue a variety of vapors-related initiatives. By increasing awareness of those goals, and the progress made toward meeting them, WRPS aims to bring greater understanding of chemical vapor hazards and how those risks are mitigated. Worker involvement and feedback is a key aspect in communications planning and delivery.

WRPS relies on a number of tools to inform workers and stakeholders on the topic of chemical vapors protection and strategy. Those tools include, but are not limited to:

- Employee meetings
- All-employee email messages
- Weekly newsletter articles
- Regular posts to the [Hanford vapors website](#)
- Participation in the employee-driven Chemical Vapors Solutions Team (CVST) and various subcommittees
- Public meetings
- Tours

By communicating openly and often through a variety of means, WRPS intends to create an understanding of what is happening, where we are going in the area of vapors and chemical protection initiatives and what it means to our employees, our families and our community.

## In this report: Fiscal Year 2017 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter highlights

- January's all-employee meeting detailing WRPS' vapors management strategy
- Completion of tank AY-102 retrieval efforts to the extent of two deployed technologies
- Release of the Office of Enterprise Assessment's report on chemical vapor actions
- A joint announcement by WRPS and the labor union regarding limited use of air-purifying respirators in Hanford's AP Farm
- Extensive communication with the Hanford Advisory Board on AY-102 retrieval progress and associated chemical vapor control strategies
- Valuable updates to the Hanford vapors website

### **About us**

*Washington River Protection Solutions is a limited liability corporation owned by AECOM and Atkins, with AREVA as its primary subcontractor. The company's mission is to reduce the environmental risk posed by 56 million gallons of radioactive and chemical waste stored in 177 underground tanks near the center of the 586-square-mile Hanford Site in southeastern Washington state. For more, visit [www.wrpstoc.com](http://www.wrpstoc.com).*

## January 2017

- A WRPS all-employee meeting was held at the Toyota Center in Kennewick. Presentations included an update on the comprehensive vapors strategy. The meeting was videotaped and posted on the company intranet, along with copies of the presentations. The meeting was highlighted in the Solutions newsletter.
- A [message was sent to employees announcing the release of the Department of Energy Office of Enterprise Assessment's report on chemical vapor actions](#). The message contained a link to the [full report](#).



*WRPS employees at a companywide meeting in January.*

- Several articles in the employee newsletter highlighted AY-102 retrieval progress and the associated chemical vapors protection measures implemented to safeguard employee health.
- WRPS and the DOE Office of River Protection (ORP) teamed up to share AY-102 retrieval progress and an overview of associated vapor controls with the Hanford Advisory Board Tank Waste Committee.
- A newsletter article highlighted the release of the ORP's annual award-fee evaluation of WRPS' fiscal year 2016 performance. The company was rated an overall "very good." ORP's review identified improvement opportunities in vapors-related communications and employee engagement.
- All-employee messages were distributed on an event where [nine workers reported odors outside AP Farm](#), but none experienced symptoms.
- All-employee messages were distributed on an event where [three workers reported odors outside AZ Farm](#), but none experienced symptoms.

### Web posts/updates

The following items were posted to the [Hanford vapors website](#):

- [Vapors Weekly Update – January 6](#)
- A left-side navigation to the [OIG Special Report Department of Energy's Actions to Address Worker Concerns Regarding Vapor Exposures at the Hanford Tank Farms](#).
- [The Office of Enterprise Assessment issues progress report and recommendations](#)
- Added a link to the [Engineering Controls Document](#) in the [Document Library](#)
- [Workers' Compensation 101](#)

#### Chemical Vapors Solutions Team (CVST) meetings

Jan. 11  
Jan. 25

#### CVST communications subcommittee meetings

Cancelled due to winter weather

- [Workflow Diagram for L&I Compensation](#)
- Updated link to [Penser Workers' Compensation Claims](#) contract
- A new section was posted on the [Tank Vapors Assessment Team \(TVAT\) page](#) that discusses cartridge filter testing. The following documents were posted to that section and cross-linked in the Document Library:
  - [AP Cartridge Test Report \(PNNL-25860\)](#)
  - [Summary of AP Cartridge Test Report](#)
  - [Third Party Qualified Independent Review team report](#)
- [Odors reported east of Hanford's AP Tank Farm](#)
- [Odors reported outside of Hanford's AZ Tank Farm](#)
- [AY-102 to AP-102 Retrieval Summary Dec. 9-31, 2016](#)
- [Vapors Weekly Update – January 31](#)

## February 2017

- WRPS announced the completion of waste retrieval from double-shell tank AY-102 to the limits of two retrieval technologies, which met a commitment made in 2014 in a Settlement Agreement between the Washington State Department of Ecology, DOE-ORP and WRPS. The achievement was recognized through an all-employee message, a newsletter article and subsequent [news release](#).
- An all-employee message and a newsletter article highlighted testing of the new AX Farm exhausters, a key safety feature when retrieval of the single-shell tanks commences.
- An all-employee message was distributed directing employees to new information posted on the intranet regarding the Workers' Compensation program.
- A message was sent to inform employees of weekend plans to transfer waste from one double-shell tank farm to another. Restrictions were put in place to mitigate and control chemical vapors during the transfer.



*An in-tank image shows the air-lift circulators and residual waste in AY-102. WRPS completed retrieval work in the tank ahead of a March 4 Settlement Agreement deadline.*

## Web posts/updates:

The following items were posted to the [Hanford vapors website](#):

- On the [Vapors Sources](#) page, a link to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website providing [general information about environmental odors](#)
- On the [Individual Sensitivity](#) page, a link to a [CDC discussion of potential health effects caused by environmental odors](#)
- A new section was added under [Reference Materials](#) to house the various [Independent Assessments](#) conducted on behalf of WRPS. Specifically, sections summarizing the [Tank Vapors Assessment Team \(TVAT\)](#) and the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) review of tank farms worker safety and health programs were posted. Additional summaries will be developed for the Office of Inspector General and Office of Enterprise Assessment reports.
- [Event notification system tested at tank farms](#)
- [Vapors Weekly Update – February 23](#)

Chemical Vapors Solutions  
Team (CVST) meetings  
Feb. 22

CVST communications  
subcommittee meetings  
Feb. 6

## March 2017

- A joint employee message signed by Mark Lindholm and HAMTC President Dave Molnaa detailed the decision to allow workers in the AP Tank Farm to wear full-face air-purifying respirators instead of supplied air when conducting low-hazard, non-intrusive, non-waste-disturbing activities outside a Vapor Control Zone. The announcement was further communicated in the employee newsletter and with development of a [new page and extensive post on the Hanford vapors website](#).



*Workers in AP Farm wearing full-face air-purifying respirators.*

- WRPS and DOE once again teamed up to provide an update on AY-102 retrieval progress to the Hanford Advisory Board (HAB). Rob Gregory, WRPS' Chemical Protection Integration Manager, gave the board an update on the Comprehensive Vapors Management Strategy. Gregory discussed the plan, its objectives and implementation, and he also answered questions from board members. The presentation received enthusiastic feedback from those in attendance.

***“The vapors update was great,” said Susan Leckband, HAB chairperson. “Our board cares very much about worker safety and appreciates DOE and WRPS providing open communication and helping us understand their vapors management strategy.”***

- WRPS' AP Farm exhauster project was named the Project Management Institute's (PMI) Project of the Year and the People's Choice Award by the Columbia River Basin Chapter. An article in the employee newsletter highlighted the achievement. The Department of Energy was highly complementary of the effort, writing: "The project team has built a best-in-class ventilation system, has developed new ways of protecting the Hanford workforce, and has set a new benchmark for future ventilation upgrade projects."
- A message to employees was distributed on an [AOP-015 event near Hanford's SX Farm](#) where three workers reported odors but no symptoms.

### **Web posts/updates:**

The following items were posted to the [Hanford vapors website](#):

- [Vapors Weekly Update – March 2](#)
- A new [webpage highlighting air-purifying respirators](#) (APRs) is now available on the Hanford vapors website.
  - The page provides basic background information on APRs and their use in tank farms.
  - The page serves as a landing spot for the:
    - [PNNL report on cartridge testing in AP Farm](#)
    - [Third-party review of respirator cartridge performance testing](#)
    - [Third-party review of APR use in AP Farm for low-hazard tasks.](#)
- [Vapors Weekly Update – March 16](#)
- On the [Independent Assessments](#) page, under [Reference Materials](#), two new links were added:
  - [Office of Inspector General \(OIG\) report](#)
  - [Office of Enterprise Assessments \(EA-32\) report](#)
- On the [Independent Assessments](#) page, under [Reference Materials](#), new links to a [summary page](#) of the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health and the organization's [full report](#).
- [Odors reported near Hanford's SX tank farm](#)
- [UPDATE: Odors reported near SX Farm – 3/30/17](#)
- [Vapors Weekly Update – March 30](#)

Chemical Vapors Solutions  
Team (CVST) meetings  
March 8  
March 22

CVST communications  
subcommittee meetings  
March 6  
March 20

### **Chemical Protection Program Office**

In October 2016, WRPS established the Chemical Protection Program Office (CPPO). The CPPO facilitates the flow of information between operational elements of WRPS to promote understanding, clarity and transparency of Hanford vapors. The [CPPO quarterly report, detailing additional communications elements, is available here.](#)