

DOE

NEWS

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DOE COMPLETES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON UPGRADING CHEM PLANT TANK FARM

The Department of Energy has completed an Environmental Assessment and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for upgrades to the high-level liquid waste tank farm at the Idaho Chemical Processing Plant located at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

The EA addressed upgrading existing tank and containment vault ventilation systems and high-level liquid waste transfer systems, as well as replacing five high-level liquid waste storage tanks and containment vaults with four new tanks, containment vaults and support systems.

However, an April 1992 decision to discontinue reprocessing spent fuel for uranium recovery at the Idaho Chemical Processing Plant makes it unlikely that the tank replacement aspect of the project will be needed. Therefore, the current proposed action includes only upgrading existing tank relief piping and high-level liquid waste transfer systems. The purpose of these upgrades is to reduce potential environmental, health and safety risks and comply with state and federal regulations.

The EA evaluated potential environmental, health and safety impacts from construction, normal operations and postulated accidents associated with the proposed upgrades. The FONSI, or Finding of No Significant Impact, is based upon evaluations in the EA.

According to the EA, no impacts on sensitive resources are expected, and potential radiological exposures associated with the proposed upgrade activities would be well within the DOE occupational exposure limits for on-site workers. Most of the upgrade activities would occur within existing, developed areas where soil and vegetation are already disturbed. Following construction, testing and start-up activities, the tank farm would be operated essentially as it was prior to the upgrades.

The other alternative evaluated in the EA was not to proceed with the upgrades under a "No Action" alternative. However, this alternative would prevent compliance with a Consent Order entered into by DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state of Idaho, which requires DOE to cease using the current systems or replace them with compliant systems by December 31, 1995.

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The EA and FONSI are available for public review at the public libraries in Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls, Boise and Fort Hall; the University of Idaho Library; the public reading room at the INEL Technical Library in Idaho Falls; the state library in Boise; and the Freedom of Information Reading Room at the Department of Energy Headquarters in Washington, DC.

Individual copies may be obtained by contacting Mike Coe, DOE-ID Operations Office, MS 1214, 785 DOE Place, Idaho Falls, Idaho, 83401-1562, or by contacting the INEL Outreach Office in Pocatello, Twin Falls or Boise, or the Environmental Restoration Information Office in Moscow.

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