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Employees of Idaho Liquid Waste Treatment Facility Thanked by DOE Officials, Others



The Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU), located east of the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site's Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC).

IDAHO FALLS, September 20, 2023 – Today, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) officials visited the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site to thank federal and contractor employees for the successful start and routine operations of a radioactive liquid waste treatment facility in support of milestones with the State of Idaho.

Deputy Secretary of Energy David Turk and DOE Office of Environmental Management (EM) Senior Advisor William “Ike” White were at the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU) to acknowledge the tireless efforts of engineers, fabricators, operators, building trades, safety professionals, and administrative professionals who helped the facility begin waste treatment operations. The IWTU started treating sodium-bearing waste on April 11, 2023. To date, the IWTU has converted more than 68,000 gallons of liquid waste from a nearby tank farm to a safer, granular solid.

“Truly a one-of-a-kind facility, IWTU has treated waste because of the tenacity and skilled professionals who worked on the project,” said Turk. “On behalf of the Department of Energy, I want to thank every person on the IWTU Team. Your efforts are recognized and deeply appreciated.”

White, who last visited Idaho in March 2023 to celebrate the early completion of the spent nuclear fuel wet-to-dry campaign, also thanked IWTU staff.

“I am thrilled to be in Idaho to celebrate another important cleanup milestone,” he said. “We would not be here today without the expertise of those who made IWTU possible,

thank you for staying focused on your mission.”



IWTU employees monitor start-up operations from the facility control room.

The IWTU was constructed from 2007 to 2012 to treat almost 900,000 gallons of sodium-bearing waste that was generated during Cold War-era spent nuclear fuel reprocessing runs at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center until 1992. Since 2012, the IWTU underwent hundreds of modifications and several tests using a simulant in the lead-up to the start of radioactive waste processing operations.

“Because of the challenges presented, treating radioactive liquid waste, like the sodium-bearing waste here in Idaho, is one of the Department’s highest priorities,” said Turk. “I look forward to a continued dedication to the mission at IWTU and closing this important chapter in Environmental Management for the citizens of Idaho.”

The DOE officials were joined by Idaho Governor Brad Little, DOE Idaho Idaho Cleanup Project Manager Connie Flohr, Idaho Environmental Coalition President (IEC) Ty Blackford, congressional staffers, and other dignitaries to thank the workforce.

“Please accept my sincere gratitude for what you have accomplished at IWTU,” said Flohr. “Considering the amount of interest in the IWTU, you literally carried the weight of the cleanup program on your shoulders. This long ride hasn’t been easy, but reaching this point is so fulfilling.”

Blackford, like Flohr, recognized the challenges the workforce had to overcome.

“This job required a lot of sacrifice over the last 16 years,” he said. “Nearly everyone spent considerable time away from friends and family, worked nights and weekends, and put off vacations. In my nearly 40 years in the cleanup program, I’ve never seen such a focused, competent group of professionals in any location I’ve worked. You remained firmly focused on the prize.”

The IWTU is currently in a maintenance phase to replace components in its granulated activated carbon beds, which remove mercury from the treated sodium-bearing liquid waste. The outage is expected to last several months.

Sodium-bearing waste treatment is expected to take three to seven years to complete, accounting for outages to conduct regular maintenance on the facility.

About the Idaho Environmental Coalition

The Idaho Environmental Coalition (IEC), led by Jacobs and North Wind Portage, manages the Idaho Cleanup Project at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site, located 45 miles west of Idaho Falls. The 10-year, \$6.4 billion project, funded through DOE's Office of Environmental Management, focuses on safely dispositioning transuranic waste, managing spent nuclear fuel, treating radioactive liquid waste, removing legacy structures, and closing facilities that have completed their missions. IEC is committed to protecting its employees, the public, and environment while meeting all existing and future milestones necessary to further the INL's mission.

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