

# Springville Journal

## Ashford Board hears update about West Valley Demonstration Project's phase one studies

By:Nora Mihalik

Date: Thursday March 24, 2011

Paul Bembia, NYSERDA program director for West Valley Site Management, visited the Ashford Town Board to give an update on the West Valley Demonstration Project's phase one studies.

NYSERDA and DOE had a public meeting last month to get public input on the studies, Bembia said, at the Ashford Board's well-attended March 9 meeting. "NYSERDA and the DOE have some technical differences that have to be resolved regarding the EIS released in January of last year. They will continue discussions at the Citizen Task Force meetings and expect to have a phase one meeting every quarter for public input," he said, adding that all are invited to participate.

Funding is an issue for 2012 and the future, as federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds end this year. Bembia explained that the base funding of \$60 million will no longer be augmented by ARRA funds as it has been for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. The right number is about \$80 million per year, Bembia added; funding has been available at about \$86 million over the last 10 years.

The EIS gave a figure of \$1 billion as the total project cost. At \$60 million per year, the project will be very much underfunded, meaning, according to Bembia, that it "will take longer than the scheduled 10 years to complete, and this will increase the total project cost."

Ashford Town Supervisor Chris Gerwitz said he has spoken with Representative Tom Reed, who is well aware of the problem, about the funding. "The lawsuit between the federal government and the state has been settled," said Bembia, "and we are all geared up and ready to go!"

In other matters:

- The sole bid for trash, tire and refuse removal was opened and a bid from Nu-Way Sanitation of Arcade of \$9,900 was accepted. "Actually I think that bid is less than last year," said Gerwitz. Pick-ups will be scheduled before Memorial Day.
- It was announced that the Connoisarauley Road Project has been completed.
- Gerwitz reported that Trident Insurance Brokerage, as a thank you, donated \$10,000 to Meals on Wheels. He said he has been invited to spend a day delivering meals and looking over the operation on March 23.
- The town's water company has been notified that they are in violation, and Gerwitz said he has been informed that the company is looking for a low or 0 percent interest loan. The company will keep the town posted on that.
- Gerwitz said he attended a February 24 meeting on Bertrand Chaffee Hospital, which highlighted the facility's upgrades and new equipment.
- Building Inspector Gary Perkins informed the board that the regional state code engineer will be at the next town board meeting to answer questions raised at the February meeting about building codes. Perkins said he was told, "You can build any house without water and without electric in it and otherwise, if things get tough, they write a variance out of Albany which overrides the rest of it." Gerwitz and Board Member William Heim said that the workman's compensation and liability questions also need to be answered. "The board would like to get to the bottom of all these questions," said Heim.
- Attendance at the annual conference for town clerks in Buffalo was approved for Ashford Town Clerk Patricia Dashnaw.
- Bids for the Fox Valley Road bridge were read and sealed. The total bids are as follows: Coldspring Construction: \$851,959; Kandy Company Inc.: \$1,644,644; H&K Services Inc.: \$878,290; Union Concrete and Construction Co.: \$848,469; Zolad's Construction Co.: \$1,353,878; Edbauer Construction: \$688,886; D&H Excavating: \$913,653 and L.C. Whitford Company Inc.: \$1,128,887. Glenn Cooley of E&M Engineering will look over all of the bids for accuracy in numbers and requirements, as will the highway committee, before officially awarding the bid at the town board work session on March 22.
- Highway Superintendent Tim Engles reported that West Valley School has requested the loan of a truck and driver to get a load of baseball sand. This request was approved.
- It was announced that the continuing Fish Fry Fridays was hosted by the Boy Scouts on March 11, and will be held at the West Valley School on March 25 and the fire hall on April 8.
- Board Member John Pfeffer announced that there will be a fire department recruitment drive open house on April 9 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is to "kind of make the point that it's not a beer swilling, beer drinking organization anymore; it's more of a professional, highly trained group of people," Pfeffer said.
- Engles reported on his trip to Albany for Advocacy Day. He said highway departments from across the state were represented there. According to board member Beverly Hess, there have been problems with suspension of mail delivery due to the snow blocking access to mailboxes.

The next Town of Ashford Board meeting will be held on April 13 at 7:30 p.m.

## Preliminary Lessons From Fukushima For Future Nuclear Power Plants

Posted March 25, 2011 by [Barry Brook](#)

No *strong* conclusions can yet be drawn on the Fukushima Nuclear Crisis, because so much detail and hard data remains unclear or unavailable. Indeed, it will probably take years to piece the whole of this story together (as has now been done for accidents like TMI and Chernobyl [read [this](#) and [this](#) from Prof. Bernard Cohen for an absolutely terrific overview]). Still, it will definitely be worth doing this post-event diagnostic, because of the valuable lessons it can teach us. In this spirit, below an associate of mine from the [Science Council for Global Initiatives](#) discusses what lessons we've learned so far. This is obviously a huge and evolving topic that I look forward to revisiting many times in the coming months...



**Guest Post** by [Dr. William Hannum](#). *Bill worked for more than 40 years in nuclear power development, stretching from design and analysis of the Shippingport reactor to the Integral Fast Reactor. He earned his BA in physics at Princeton and his MS and PhD in nuclear physics at Yale. He has held key management positions with the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE), in reactor physics , reactor safety, and as Deputy Manager of the Idaho Operations Office.*

*He served as Deputy Director General of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, Paris, France; Chairman of the TVA Nuclear Safety Review Boards, and Director of the [West Valley](#) (high level nuclear waste processing and D&D) [Demonstration Project](#). Dr. Hannum is a fellow of the American Nuclear Society, and has served as a consultant to the National Academy of Engineering on nuclear proliferation issues.*

He wrote a popular article for Scientific American on smarter use of nuclear waste, which you can [download as a PDF here](#).

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## Background

On 11 March 2011, a massive earthquake hit Japan. The six reactors at Fukushima-Dai-ichi suffered ground accelerations somewhat in excess of design specification. It appears that all of the critical plant equipment survived the earthquake without serious damage, and safety systems performed as designed. The following tsunami, however, carried the fuel tanks for the emergency diesels out to sea, and compromised the battery backup systems. All off-site power was lost, and power sufficient operate the pumps that provide cooling of the reactors and the used-fuel pools remained unavailable for over a week. Heroic efforts by the TEPCo operators limited the radiological release. A massive recovery operation will begin as soon as they succeed in restoring the shutdown cooling systems.



It is important to put the consequences of this event in context. This was not a disaster (the earthquake and tsunami were disasters). This was not an accident; the plant experienced a natural event (“Act of God” in insurance parlance) far beyond what it was designed for. Based on the evidence available today, it can be stated with confidence that no one will have suffered any identifiable radiation-related health effects from this event. A few of the operators may have received a high enough dose of radiation to have a slight statistical increase in their long term risk of developing cancer, but I would place the number at no more than 10 to 50. None of the reports suggest that any person will have received a dose approaching one Sievert, which would imply immediate health effects.

Even ignoring the possibility of hormetic effects, this is approaching the trivial when compared with the impacts of the earthquake and tsunami, where deaths will likely come to well over 20,000. Health

impacts from industrial contamination, refinery fires, lack of sanitation, etc., etc. may reasonably be supposed to be in the millions. Even the “psychological” impacts of the Fukushima problems must be seen to pale in contrast to those from the earthquake and tsunami.

The radiological impact on workers is also small relative to the non-radiological injuries suffered by them. One TEPCO crane operator died from injuries sustained during the earthquake. Two TEPCO workers who had been in the turbine building of Unit 4, are missing. At least eleven TEPCO workers were taken to hospital because of earthquake-related physical injuries.

TEPCO has suffered a major loss of capital equipment, the value of which is non-trivial even in the context of the earthquake and tsunami devastation. They also face a substantial cost for cleanup of the contamination which has been released from the plants. These are financial costs, not human health and well being matters.

### The Sequence of Events

Following the tsunami, the operators had no power for the pumps that circulate the primary coolant to the heat exchangers. The only way to remove the decay heat was to boil the water in the core. After the normal feed water supplies were exhausted, they activated the system to supply sea water to the core, knowing this would render the plant unfit to return to operation. In this way, the reactors were maintained in a relatively stable condition, allowing the water to boil, and releasing the resulting steam to the containment building. Since this is a Boiling Water Reactor (BWR), it is good at boiling water. Operating with the water level 1.7 to 2 meters below the top of the core, they mimicked power operation; the core normally operates at power with the water level well below the top of the core, the top part being cooled by steam. Cold water in, steam out, is a crude but effective means of cooling.

Before using sea water, according to reports, water levels are thought to have dropped far enough to allow the fuel to overheat, damaging some of the fuel cladding. When overheated, the cladding (Zirconium) reacts, claiming oxygen from the water. Water, less oxygen, is hydrogen. When vented to the containment and then to the outer building, the hydrogen built up, and eventually exploded, destroying the enclosing building. With compromised fuel, the steam being vented contains radioactive fission products. The design of BWRs is such that this venting goes through a water bath (in the Torus), that filters out all but the most volatile fission products.

With time, the heat generated in used fuel (both in the core and in the fuel pool) decreases. From an initial power of about 2% of full power an hour after shutdown (when the coolant pumps lost power) to about 0.2% a week later, the amount of steam venting decreases, and releases can be controlled and planned for favorable weather conditions.



A second concern arose because of the inability to provide cooling for the used-fuel pool in Unit 4, and later Unit 3. The Unit 4 pool was of concern because, for maintenance, the entire core had been off-loaded into the pool in November (it is believed that two older core loadings were also in this pool, awaiting transfer to the central storage pool). With only a few months cooling, the residual heat is sufficient to raise the temperature of the water in the pool to boiling within several days or weeks. There is also some suggestion that the earthquake may have sloshed some water out of the pool. In any case, the fuel pools for Units 3 and 4 eventually were thought to be losing enough water such that the fuel would no longer be adequately cooled. Since the fuel pools are outside the primary containment, leakage from these pools can spread contamination more readily than that from the reactor core. High-power water hoses have been used to maintain water in the fuel pools.

While many areas within the plant complex itself, and localized areas as far away as 20 Km may require cleanup of the contamination released from the reactors and from the fuel pools, there is no indication that there are any areas that will require long term isolation or exclusion.

### Lessons Learned

It is not the purpose of this paper to anticipate the lessons to be learned from this event, but a few items may be noted. One lesson will dominate all others:

*Prolonged lack of electrical power must be precluded.*

While the designers believed their design included sufficient redundancies (diesels, batteries, redundant connections to the electrical grid), the simultaneous extended loss of all sources of power left the operators dependant on creative responses. This lesson is applicable both to the reactor and to fuel pools.

All nuclear installations will probably be required to do a complete review of the security of their access to electrical power. It may be noted that this lesson is applicable to many more activities than just nuclear power. Extended loss of electrical power in any major metropolitan area would generate a monstrous crisis. The loss of power was irrelevant to other activities in the region near the Fukushima plant because they were destroyed by the tsunami.

Other lessons that will be learned that may be expected to impact existing plants include:

*Better means of control of hydrogen buildup in the case of fuel damage may be required.*

In addition, detailed examinations of the Fukushima plants will provide evidence of the margins available in seismic protection. Detailed reconstruction of the event will give very helpful insights into the manner that fission product can release from damaged fuel, and their transport.

#### Applicability of Fukushima Information to MOX-fueled Reactors:

The core of Unit 3 was fueled with plutonium recycled from earlier used reactor fuel. Preliminary information suggests that the release of hazardous radioactive material, for this type of event, is not significantly different than that non-recycle fuel. More detailed examinations after the damaged cores are recovered, and models developed to reconstruct the events, will be necessary to verify and quantify this conclusion.

#### Applicability of Fukushima Information to Gen-III Reactors:

In the period since the Fukushima plants were designed, advanced designs for BWRs (and other reactor types) have been developed to further enhance passive safety (systems feedback characteristics that compensate for abnormal events, without reliance on operator actions or on engineered safety systems), simplify designs, and reduce costs. The results of these design efforts (referred to as Gen-III) are the ones now under construction in Japan, China and elsewhere, and proposed for construction in the U.S.

One of the most evident features of the Gen-III systems is that they are equipped with large gravity-feed water reservoirs that would flood the core in case of major disruption. This will buy additional time in the event of a Fukushima type situation, but the plants will ultimately rely of restoration of power at some point in time.

The applicability of the other lessons (hydrogen control, fuel pool) will need to be evaluated, but there are no immediately evident lessons beyond these that will affect these designs in a major way.



Applicability of Fukushima

### Information to Recycling Reactors:

As noted above, Unit-III was fueled with recycled plutonium, and there are no preliminary indications that this had any bearing on the performance of this plant during this event.

Advanced recycling, where essentially all of the recyclable material is recovered and used (as opposed to recovery and recycle of plutonium) presents a different picture. Full recycling is effective only with a fast reactor. A metal fuel, clad in stainless steel, allows a design of a sodium-cooled fast reactor with astonishing passive safety characteristics. Because the sodium operates far from its boiling point in an essentially unpressurized system, catastrophic events caused by leakage or pipe failures cannot occur. The metal fuel gives the system very favorable feedback characteristics, so that even the most extreme disruptions are passively accommodated. A complete loss of cooling, such as at Fukushima, leads to only a modest temperature rise. Even if the control system were rendered inoperable, and the system lost cooling but remained at full power (this is a far more serious scenario than Fukushima, where the automatic shutdown system operated as designed) the system would self-stabilize at low power, and be cooled by natural convection to the atmosphere. Should the metal fuel fail for any reason, internal fission product gases would cause the fuel to foam and disperse, providing the most powerful of all shutdown mechanisms.

The only situation that could generate energy to disperse material from the reactor is the possibility of a sodium-water reaction. By using an intermediate sodium system (reactor sodium passes its energy to a non-radioactive sodium system, which then passes its energy to water to generate steam to turn the electrical generator), the possibility of a sodium-water reaction spreading radioactive materials is precluded.

These reactors must accommodate seismic challenges, just as any other reactor type. While there are many such design features in common with other reactor designs, the problem is simpler for the fast reactor because of the low pressure, and the fact that this type of reactor does not need elaborate water injection systems.

In light of the Fukushima event, one must consider the potential consequences of a massive tsunami accompanying a major challenge to the reactor. Since it may be difficult to ensure that the sodium systems remain intact under the worst imaginable circumstances, it may be prudent to conclude that a tsunami-prone location may not be the best place to build a sodium facility (whether a nuclear power plant or something else).

#### Conclusions:

**The major lesson to be learned is that for any water-cooled reactor there must be an absolutely secure supply of power sufficient to operate cooling pumps. Many other lessons are likely to be learned. At this early point, it appears that design criteria for fuel storage pools may need to be revised, and hydrogen control assessed.**

Given the severity of the challenge faced by the operators at Fukushima, and their ability to manage the situation in such a way as to preclude any significant radiation related health consequences for workers or the public, this event should be a reassurance that properly designed and regulated nuclear power does not pose a catastrophic risk to the public—that, overall, nuclear power remains a safe and clean energy sources.

Given the financial impact this event will have on the utility (loss of four major power plants, massive cleanup responsibilities), it will be worthwhile for the designers, constructors, operators, and licensing authorities to support a thorough analysis of what actually transpired during this event.

# **Jamestown Post-Journal, March 26, 2011**

## **Comments Being Taken On Clean Up Of Melter**

March 26, 2011

WEST VALLEY - Those wishing to comment on a federal evaluation for clean up of a melter used at the West Valley Demonstration Project can do so for the next 45 days at [melter@wv.doe.gov](mailto:melter@wv.doe.gov).

The melter was used in clean up efforts from 1996 to 2002 at the site of the former nuclear fuel reprocessing plant that closed in the 1970s. The melter was used in vitrification processes that solidified high-level radioactive waste generated during commercial reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel when the plant was opened.

The federal government has ruled the melter can be disposed of as low-level radioactive waste in a document available at [em.doe.gov/pdfs/WVDP\\_Melter\\_Draft\\_WIR\\_Eval.pdf](http://em.doe.gov/pdfs/WVDP_Melter_Draft_WIR_Eval.pdf).



**Springville Journal, Thursday, March 31, 2011**

## **DOE looks for funds for cleanup of West Valley Demonstration Project by 2020**

By: Matt Sargeant

Much work remains to be done at the West Valley Demonstration Project site, but none of that can be done without proper funding. When the West Valley Citizen Task Force met on March 23, Bryan Bower, United States Department of Energy-WVDP project director, expressed the need for funding the project in West Valley.

In his presentation, Bower listed some of the benefits of the waste cleanup, saying, “We reduce risks and protect our workers, our communities and the environment through cleanup. Our work is urgent and essential.” He added, in his presentation, “We have demonstrated value for the American taxpayer by delivering significant progress in the past several years in reducing risks and the overall liability – but our work is not done.”

Bower stated, “Time is not on our side. Costs and risks increase over time,” and added that the site spends approximately \$20 million a year simply for facility maintenance. “That’s the minimum we need just to be here,” he said. “Anything above that goes to the decontamination [and] decommissioning that we’re doing.”

Part of Bower’s presentation included slides that were shown to Congress, illustrating DOE’s nationwide vision. “By 2020, [Environmental Management] cleanup will be virtually completed,” said Bower.

“Hanford will be the only large site remaining. Minor cleanup will remain at Savannah River, Portsmouth and Oak Ridge.” When cleanups started in 1989, there were 110 sites over 35 states that needed to be decontaminated. Now, only 18 sites over 11 states remain.

However, with the work that has been completed in West Valley, WVDP may be a lower national priority. While all sites receive funding for “essential activities to maintain a safe, secure and compliant posture in the EM complex,” according to the presentation, and other sites have such concerns as “radioactive tank waste stabilization, treatment and disposal,” the West Valley site is primarily dealing with “excess facility deactivation and decommissioning,” which is on the bottom of the program priorities.

Still, DOE hopes to complete WVDP cleanup by 2020, which would include the following goals:

- “Complete [high level waste] activities,”
- “Ship and dispose all low level and transuranic waste,”
- “Complete demolition of Main Plant Process Building, Vitrification Facility and Remote Handled Waste Facility,”
- “Disposition and demolish all [43] surplus facilities,”
- “Protect the groundwater,”

## **DOE looks for funds for cleanup of West Valley Demonstration Project by 2020 (*continued*)**

- “Remove and dispose of all contaminated soils from Waste Management Areas,” and
- “Complete Phase 1 Decommissioning.”

Bower outlined some of the economic benefits at West Valley, including the fact that the project has created 84 jobs and saved 19 jobs with the \$63 million received in Recovery Act funds, \$45 million of which have been paid to date.

In addition, \$19 million in “Recovery Act prime and subcontracts [have been] awarded to small business,” while \$13 million of \$60 million “in base prime and subcontracts [have been] awarded to small business.”

“West Valley Demonstration Project is a sound investment,” Bower said. “An additional \$20 million annually [from 2012 to 2016] allows WVDP to complete its cleanup vision by 2020, saving \$120 million LCC and reducing the completion date by four years.

“Every taxpayer dollar invested in this project – both federal and state – is precious and provides significant economic benefit to the region with an emphasis on small business,” he added.

“We have not been at \$60 million since 1989, so it’s really not level funding,” Program Director Paul Bembia of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority said. “The suggested \$20 million brings this time frame back four years. This is a good point if people want to write their elected officials. That’s a pretty decent argument there.”

Bower concluded, “As demonstrated by our outstanding safety and environmental record, we are committed to worker and public safety and protection of the environment.”

In other matters:• DOE is considering options for the disposal of greater-than-class-C low-level radioactive waste and GTCC-like waste to be documented in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. A presentation was given via teleconference by Document Manger Arnold Edelman. The proposed action is to “construct and operate a new facility or facilities or use an existing facility for the disposal of GTCC LLRW and GTCC-like waste,” since there is no such facility in existence to date.

While DOE has no preferred alternative, the presentation listed several: no action, “a geological repository-Waste Isolation Pilot Plant,” “intermediate depth boreholes,” “enhanced near surface trenches” and “above grade vaults.” The first option risks potential long-term human health impacts but would require no transportation. The WIPP would result in a low impact but would require “an estimated 11,800 rail shipments or 33,700 truck shipments over 60 years, which could result in one to two non-radiological accident fatalities,” according to Edelman. The final three alternatives would have “low impacts for all resource areas except potential long-term human health impacts in some sites.”

## **DOE looks for funds for cleanup of West Valley Demonstration Project by 2020 (*continued*)**

- Manger Laurene Rowell of West Valley Environmental Services, addressed the vitrification melter and its relation to waste incidental to the reprocessing process. WIR includes three criteria, which are removal of “key radionuclides to the maximum extent that is technically and economically practical,” management “to meet safety requirements” and meeting “Class C concentration limits.” The melter is stored on-site with two other vitrification vessels and does or can be made to comply with the three criteria.
- Bower said, “DOE is keeping a very close watch on what is happening in Japan.” Currently in the field are 39 DOE experts, who took approximately nine tons of monitoring equipment with them. The information being collected can be viewed at [www.energy.gov/japan2011](http://www.energy.gov/japan2011), which Bower said “probably the best way to keep an eye on how DOE is involved in the work that is going on in Japan right now.”
- Bower reported that the second supplemental agreement between DOE and NYSERDA was signed and can be viewed on NYSERDA’s Web site. The agreement is highlighted by a 50/50 cost share agreement between the two agencies.

The next CTF meeting is scheduled for April 27 at the Ashford Office Complex.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m., as opposed to the usual 6:30 p.m. meeting time.

**Springville Journal, Thursday, March 31, 2011**

**Voluntary work force reductions offered by WVES**

By:Matt Sargeant

A number of individuals employed by West Valley Environmental Services may need to begin looking for new jobs in the coming months. Fortunately for the employees, that process can begin on their own volition. The conclusion of several projects at the West Valley Demonstration Project that were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which created 65 employment opportunities at the site, has brought about the need to eliminate positions. WVES looks to reduce its work force by about that same number.

In response to this need, WVES instituted a “Self-Select” program on March 21, which gives employees the chance to leave the company on their own free will, receiving “full separation benefits” in return. According to a notification sent out to stakeholders, three purposes are hoped to be achieved by the company through this plan: “first, it affords employees interested in retiring or seeking employment elsewhere the opportunity to do so,” “second, as employees voluntarily leave employment with WVES, it creates an opportunity for employees hired under [ARRA] to continue employment at WVDP,” and “last, but certainly not least . . . it may be possible to avoid or eliminate the need for involuntary separations.”

Separation benefits will include severance pay (which will depend on years of service), retraining support and extended health care coverage.

WVES President and Project Manager John McKibbin said he appreciates the work these people have put in, but realizes that changes need to be made. “The employees we hired under the Recovery Act were great additions to our work force,” he said. “Our experienced employees mentored the new employees, and the combination of experience and a fresh perspective were a winning combination. However, because the size of the work force must be reduced, WVES is committed to making the transition as smooth as possible for our employees and to safely completing our work scope at the WVDP.”

The SS program will be open to applications from employees for 15 days. After this time frame, the company will “re-evaluate staffing levels in various skill and expertise areas to determine if involuntary staff reductions are necessary to meet project needs,” according to the stakeholder notification. WVES will look for those individuals who will best benefit WVDP’s objectives as it looks to keep employees on board while still performing the necessary reductions.

Any questions can be directed to either Sonja Allen, senior communications administrator, at 942-2152 or [Sonja.Allen@wves.org](mailto:Sonja.Allen@wves.org), or John Chamberlain, technical advisor, at 942-4610 or [John.Chamberlain@wves.org](mailto:John.Chamberlain@wves.org).

# **Buffalo News, 03-31-2011**

## **West Valley nuke project seeks 65 job cuts**

By **Matt Glynn**

NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

Published: March 31, 2011, 12:05 PM

West Valley Environmental Services, the prime contractor to the U.S. Department of Energy at the West Valley Demonstration Project, plans to cut 65 jobs as projects supported by federal stimulus dollars wrap up.

WVES said it is offering employees an opportunity to leave with full separation benefits, in hopes of achieving the job reduction target with few or no layoffs. WVES created 65 jobs as a result of the federal stimulus funds, which are due to run out in June.

Employees who leave under the "self-select program" will receive benefits including severance pay based on years of service, extended health care coverage and retraining support. Workers were given about two weeks to apply for the program.

More job reductions at the West Valley Demonstration Project could occur when the Energy Department chooses a new contractor to take over WVES' role, in the June to August time frame, according to WVES. WVES's contract expires June 30.

There are more than 320 jobs at the site and administrative offices, according to a notice filed with the state Department of Labor.

West Valley, in Cattaraugus County, was the site of the nation's only privately operated commercial nuclear fuel processing facility. The operation separated reusable uranium and plutonium from spent fuel, which came from both commercial and federal nuclear reactors.

The facility was shut down in 1972. Cleanup has been ongoing since the 1980s.

[mglynn@buffnews.com](mailto:mglynn@buffnews.com)

## WNED, Buffalo, Toronto, March 31, 2011

### **End of Stimulus Funds Leads to Layoffs at West Valley**

Daniel Robison (2011-03-31)



**BUFFALO (WNED)** - Cleanup at the West Valley Demonstration Project will continue with fewer employees. The end of federal stimulus funding will result in 65 layoffs at the former nuclear waste reprocessing plant.

But officials say the loss in funding will not compromise the site's rehab - but will slow it down. So far, cleanup at West Valley has taken nearly 40 years and officials are hesitant to put an estimate on the number of decades it may still take.

West Valley spokesman John Chamberlain says more than \$60 million in stimulus funding sped up some aspects of the project, including the construction of a one-of-a-kind a underground water filter that absorbs radioactive contamination. But he says much of the site still needs attention.

"The labor force has to match up with the amount of funding that's available and they will adjust the scope of work and how fast you move forward on that work based on how much funding there is," Chamberlain says.

West Valley also faces a likely cut to its base budget, Chamberlain says, as some Congressional versions next year's spending plans reduce the site's operating funds.

"That budget obviously hasn't been decided upon and we all know the situation that's going on with the federal budget. That's what we're in for. It is less we have received in past years when you count in the stimulus money, especially the last few years," Chamberlain says.

If those cuts are made law, Chamberlain says additional layoffs could occur. West Valley's stimulus-related layoffs will be complete by June 30.

In the 1960s, West Valley was the first plant in the country to attempt to recycle nuclear waste. Complications and changing economic conditions led its shuttering in 1972.

# The Buffalo News

Friday, April 1, 2011

## **West Valley contractor eliminating 65 jobs Workers were hired with stimulus funding**

By **Matt Glynn**  
NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

The prime contractor to the U.S. Department of Energy at the West Valley Demonstration Project is cutting its work force by about 20 percent.

West Valley Environmental Services says it needs to eliminate 65 of its 325 jobs as federal stimulus dollars tied to specific projects come to an end. The cuts will leave the contractor with about 260 jobs at the Cattaraugus County operation.

Additional reductions could follow when a new prime contractor takes over this summer and decides how many employees it needs at West Valley.

West Valley Environmental is trying to eliminate the 65 jobs with few or no involuntary layoffs, by offering a voluntary separation program to workers. Employees have until Monday to apply for the program, said John Chamberlain, the company's technical adviser.

Employees who leave under the "self-select program" will receive benefits including severance pay based on years of service, extended health care coverage and retraining support.

About \$64 million in federal stimulus dollars was awarded to accelerate certain projects at West Valley over a three-year period. Those funds expire in June.

"We have to get to the right employment to match that," Chamberlain said. The 65 jobs represent the same number of positions created with the stimulus funds.

The work force at West Valley could shrink some more. The Energy Department is about to select a prime contractor to succeed West Valley Environmental to carry out the next phase of work under a seven-year contract. That work will include some demolition.

"There could be another round of layoffs, or there might not be. We don't know," Chamberlain said. The answer will not come until the new contractor is in place this summer and evaluates the work force.

West Valley, just south of Springville, was the site of the nation's only privately operated commercial nuclear fuel processing facility. The operation separated reusable uranium and plutonium from spent fuel, which came from both commercial and federal nuclear reactors.

The facility was shut down in 1972. Cleanup has been ongoing since the 1980s.

Employment at West Valley rose through the 1980s and early 1990s, peaking at about 1,000 people in the mid-1990s, according to data from West Valley Environmental. Employment there has fallen over the past 15 years, dropping below the 400-person mark about five years ago. The company has been the prime contractor since 2007. About half of the site's current work force comes from north of Cattaraugus Creek, Chamberlain said.

**WCAX.COM**

**Government contractor plans to cut 65 jobs as federal stimulus dollars end**

*Associated Press - April 1, 2011 3:05 AM ET*

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. (AP) - A western New York government contractor says it will cut 65 jobs as projects supported by federal stimulus funds wrap up.

West Valley Environmental Services is the prime contractor to the U.S. Department of Energy at the West Valley Demonstration Project, 36 miles southeast of Buffalo. The company says it's offering employees an opportunity to leave with full separation benefits in hopes of achieving job reductions with few or no layoffs.

The company created 65 jobs as a result of federal stimulus funds, which end in June. A notice filed with the state labor department says there are more than 320 jobs at the site.

West Valley was the site of the nation's only privately operated commercial nuclear fuel processing facility. The facility was shut down in 1972. Cleanup has been ongoing since the

Columbus, Indiana

## **Contractor at NY nuclear cleanup site cutting work force by 65; jobs tied to stimulus money**

- THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
- First Posted: April 04, 2011 - 6:06 am  
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A spokesman says workers have until Monday to apply for the "self-select" program.

Right now, 325 people work for the contractor at the Cattaraugus County site. The number's being reduced because stimulus funds awarded to accelerate some projects over a three-year period expire in June.

The site 30 miles south of Buffalo housed the nation's first commercial nuclear reprocessing facility from 1966 to 1972. Cleanup has been under way since 1980.

Forbes.com

## **Contractor at NY nuke cleanup cutting work force**

Associated Press, 04.04.11, 11:05 AM EDT

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Published: April 4, 2011, 6:06 AM

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Updated: April 4, 2011, 6:09 AM

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## **Business First of Buffalo, April 15-21, 2011 Issue**

### **West Valley site plans to cut employment by 65**

Earlier this month, West Valley Environmental Services Co. LLC offered employees an opportunity to voluntarily leave the company and receive full separation benefits.

The offer coincided with the completion of projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, according to spokesman **John Chamberlain**.

“WVES anticipates the need to reduce the current work force by approximately 65 positions – the same number of jobs created by Recovery Act funding,” he said.

The Self-Select Program accomplishes three objectives:

- It affords employees interested in retiring or seeking employment elsewhere the opportunity to do so.
- As employees voluntarily leave WVES, it creates an opportunity for those hired under the Recovery Act to continue employment at the West Valley Demonstration Project.
- If the size of the work force can be successfully reduced through attrition and the Self-Select Program, it may be possible to avoid or eliminate the need for involuntary layoffs.

# Dunkirk OBSERVER, April 19, 2011

## **Higgins explains 'no' vote on 2011 spending plan**

April 19, 2011

Congressman Brian Higgins has announced he has voted no on the 2011 federal spending bill, calling the plan particularly bad for Western New York priorities.

Higgins said, "We need a budget that is fiscally responsible and creates jobs, instead what was before us today is a job killer for Western New York. It cuts medical research dollars which support jobs along our Medical Campus, threatens public safety by cutting police jobs in our communities, stifles economic development with Block Grant and waterfront development cuts and leaves Western New York Seniors out in the cold by slashing HEAP money. The federal government should be a partner in this region's economic recovery and we will continue to fight to see that happen."

Summary of Cuts in H.R. 1473 that Impact WNY

### Medical Research

Cuts National Institutes of Health by \$260 million, which is severely inadequate given the rate of inflation and will result in fewer grant applications awarded, potentially impacting Roswell Park, the University at Buffalo, and Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute. (H.R. 1 proposed a \$1.6 billion cut.)

Cuts Center for Disease Control by \$69 million.

### Health Care

Cuts Community Health Centers by \$600 million. This could stifle efforts locally to expand access to health care in both Erie and Chautauqua counties. (H.R. 1 proposed a \$1 billion cut.)

### Economic Development/ Jobs

Cuts Community Development Block Grants by \$950 million, which will reduce funding for Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Lackawanna, Dunkirk, and Jamestown. This will abruptly decrease the funds available to communities across Western New York for economic development and neighborhood revitalization. (H.R. 1 proposed a \$2.5 billion cut.)

Cuts the Brownfields Redevelopment Program by \$18 million. The South Buffalo Brownfield Opportunity Area contains 1,800 acres of underutilized land alone. (H.R.1 eliminated the program.)

**Cuts non-defense environmental clean-up funding by \$20 million, which means less funding will be available for West Valley.**

Cuts Youthbuild and Job Corps initiatives by \$23 million, affecting local organizations such as Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation (CHRIC) and Cassadaga Job Corp. H.R. 1 proposed \$102.5 million.

Cuts Dislocated Worker Assistance by \$125 million, Green jobs innovation fund by \$40 million, AmeriCorps by \$23 million, Economic Development Assistance programs by \$9 million

Corporation for Public Broadcasting is funded at \$445 million, maintaining current funding levels. H.R. 1 eliminated funds for CPB.

### Education

Cuts summer Pell Grant program grant funding, hurting institutions with a large number of Pell Grant awards like Trocaire. (Does not contain a 15 percent cut to the maximum Pell Grant award. Maximum Pell grant award maintained at \$5,550.)

Funds Head Start at \$7.6 billion, \$340 million above the enacted level and \$1.4 billion above H.R. 1. This prevents 218,000 low-income children from being removed from Head Start. Each year, over 50,000 New York children and families participate in Head Start.

Title I no cut to the Title I education grant that would have cost 10,000 jobs

#### Transportation and Water Infrastructure

Cuts WNY waterfront development by \$11 million by rescinding earmarks: over \$5 million in authorized by the transportation bill in 1987 and \$6 million authorized in 1991 would be rescinded unless at least 10% of the funding has been sent out to contract by September 30, 2011.

Cuts Army Corps of Engineers by \$575 million despite the current backlog. This makes it less likely we will dredge our harbors or initiate major water projects.

Cuts State Drinking Water and Waste Water Infrastructure funds by \$997 million, making it difficult for Buffalo to eliminate CSO's and other WNY localities to build or upkeep their infrastructure.

Cuts Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \$175 million, affecting an resource that generates jobs for over one million people, with a \$125 billion impact on the nation's economy.

Rescinds \$2.5 billion in highway contract authority.

Cuts \$650 from Federal Highway Investment and \$293 from "Surface Transportation Priorities"

Cuts High Speed Rail funding by \$2.9 billion, making it tougher for Empire Corridor to secure funds turned away by other states

#### Public Safety

Cuts the Community-Oriented Policy Services (COPS) Hiring Program by \$296 million. Police departments in both Erie and Chautauqua Counties have benefited from this program, including the City of Buffalo and the City of Lackawanna.

Cuts the Urban Area Security Initiative by \$162 million. This will reduce the amount available for preparedness by Erie County and its local governments.

Cuts FEMA Flood Map Modernization funds by \$38 million, making it more difficult for us to push for the elimination of WNY neighborhoods from the requirement to purchase flood insurance.

Cuts State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance by \$415 million.

Cuts Juvenile Justice Programs by \$148 million

#### Veterans and Seniors

Cuts Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) funding by \$390 million. This funding is directed to low-income families and seniors on a fixed income to help them heat their homes. During the 2009-2010 HEAP season, the program provided 203,237 benefits totaling \$51.9 million in assistance to residents in Erie County and 31,818 benefits totaling \$9.1 million in Chautauqua County.

Reduces funding the Department of Energy can dedicate to weatherization assistance.

Cuts construction of veterans facilities by \$277 million

Cuts for veterans supportive housing vouchers by \$25 million.

## Springville Journal, Thursday, April 21, 2011

Ashford Board meeting provides a crash course in worker's compensation

By:Nora Mihalik

Date: 2011-04-20

All in attendance at the most recent Ashford Town Board meeting came away having learned a great deal from Steve Carbone, acting director of the Stakeholder Outreach and Education Division of the NYS Workers' Compensation Board and Raymond H. Jordan, senior public health sanitarian from the Cattaraugus County Health Department. The board had invited these gentlemen to attend its April 13 meeting to answer questions and provide information to those in the audience. A New York state code engineer was also invited but did not attend.

Board Member William Heim addressed the mandate for contractors to provide workmans' compensation insurance for employees. He said, "Workmans' comp. has gone up 41 percent ...for some people ... [depending on job classification]," and questioned why some groups are exempt from that mandate. Carbone stated that the general increase was 11 percent.

He then provided information packets on the Prove it to Move it Program, which outlines the compliance requirements for workers' compensation and disability benefits needed for permits, licenses and contracts. Carbone explained how any municipality providing a hazardous employment permit or license must "get proof of compensation or the fact that they're legally exempt, from the applicant, on forms that [are] authorized." He also outlined how the name on the permit determines liability for everything including adherence to building codes. Some of the exemptions include a sole proprietor's doing all of the work alone and legal partnerships where all work is done by the partners.

There are hazards to the partnership exemption, he pointed out, as "partnerships are like a marriage. You are financially liable for everything your partners do [however]; that is a true legal 'work around' that is acceptable."

Another exemption is a one- or two-person corporation where one or two officers own all of the stock. "In all of those cases," Carbone said, "they have to be doing all of the work themselves, no sub-contractors and nobody else at the job site." Regarding church groups or non-profits, Carbone explained that after they prove they are exempt, they can have as many volunteers as they want doing the work, whereas, with a for-profit, a volunteer is an employee per the law.

Carbone explained how 2007 reform legislation gave some teeth to enforcement of the workers' compensation law. Non-compliance can now rise to a felony level with penalties starting at \$72,000. There is a whistle blower form online at [www.WCB.State.NY.US](http://www.WCB.State.NY.US), he said, where anyone can inform the compensation board of known or suspected violations, which the board will then investigate.

Carbone said that there are still some loopholes in the law and advised that business groups band together and contact their legislators to try to close those loopholes in order to insure a level playing field.

Resident Art Munson asked about tree removal contractors and was told by Carbone that they also needed workers' compensation coverage. By law, the owner of the timber is liable under section 56, he explained, so if the timber is sold to the contractor before tree removal, the contractor assumes liability.

Resident Dave Jones, owner of Southern Tier Building Performance Analysts, asked if he had to carry workers' compensation when using subcontractors or if that was the subcontractors' responsibility. Carbone answered that "the GC [ General Contractor] is liable for all claims of uninsured contractors," and all employees are the GC's direct employees.

Springville Journal, Thursday, April 21, 2011 (continued)

He detailed that, since 1985, all homeowner's insurance policies for owner-occupied one, two, three or four-family residences carry a compensation rider for employees under the compensation law who work fewer than 40 total hours per week. This provides unlimited workers' compensation coverage if, for example, a worker building a deck on an owner-occupied house is injured "as long as that contractor was working less than 40 hours a week, he was doing a renovation to your home, not a minor repair. But," he said, "people doing painting or minor repairs ... are not employees [under the compensation law]."

Additionally, if no building permit is required for a job like siding a house, workers' compensation coverage is still required, according to Carbone.

Jordan explained that, according to the state sanitary code, no building permit or certificate of occupancy should be issued for a residence unless there is an adequate sewage system in the plans. An outhouse, composting toilet, incinerating toilet and pit privy are acceptable alternate systems, he said. A system for handling 'grey water' is still needed. Heim asked what would happen if the health department was informed of homes that did not have a grey water system. "We would investigate," said Jordan. He said the design flow is calculated at a minimum of 110 gallons per bedroom of the dwelling.

Heim also asked if the lack of a grey water disposal system is ever subject to enforcement by the health department. Jordan said that legal actions have been taken, and "the law has supported our position." If there is no voluntary compliance, then, as a last resort, there can be a hearing. Jordan said, "We have put condemnation posters on homes and we have condemned homes for the lack of sewage systems." The sheriff's department would enforce any condemnation notice. The health department and code enforcement officers work closely together, Jordan said, and the town boards have to back their code enforcement officer.

In other matters:

- Paul Bembia, NYSERDA program director, reported that the facility is still focused on having the federal appropriation increased to \$85 million for WVDP for 2012.

- Gerwitz said that the slide on the north side of the new Thornwood Drive will be fixed when the weather improves. He also reported that the Fox Valley job is being held up by FEMA. He wrote to FEMA to get the funding back up and called Congressman Thomas Reed, who is "putting pressure on them."

Gerwitz estimated that it costs the town about \$10,000 per year to go around.

- The trash pickup is scheduled for the week of April 25 and tires will be collected on that Saturday.
- Highway Superintendent Tim Engles said that the excavator repairs have not been done yet, as the town is waiting for the mechanic. He also said that the Riceville Road cattle pass is getting bad, but he thinks it could be saved for several more years.

The next Ashford Town Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11, at 7:30 p.m.

## **Buffalo News, Saturday, April 23, 2011**

### **15 take buyouts at West Valley**

**By Matt Glynn**

NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER

Updated: April 23, 2011, 6:27 AM

Fifteen employees of West Valley Environmental Services are taking voluntary separation packages, meaning as many as 50 additional employees will be laid off to reach a job-reduction target.

The company, the Energy Department's prime contractor at the West Valley Demonstration Project, announced in late March that it would cut 65 of its 324 jobs as federal stimulus funds tied to specific projects come to an end.

It offered a "self-select" separation program in hopes of minimizing the number of layoffs required at the Cattaraugus County site.

"Management is evaluating the remaining skill set to determine what positions will be eliminated," said John D. Chamberlain, technical adviser for the company.

Layoff notifications will go out in June, Chamberlain said. The last day of work for all the affected employees, whether laid off or leaving voluntarily, will be June 30.

Additional job reductions could follow when the Energy Department this summer selects a new prime contractor to handle the next phase of work. The new contractor will decide how many workers it needs.

West Valley, just south of Springville, was the site of the nation's only privately operated commercial nuclear fuel processing facility.

The operation separated reusable uranium and plutonium from spent fuel, which came from both commercial and federal nuclear reactors.

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