

EM officials tout D&D progress

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At the recent National Cleanup Workshop held by the Office of Environmental Management (EM), Assistant Secretary Monica Regalbuto cited a number of EM accomplishments achieved over the past year and included the progress in deactivating and decommissioning at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant at Piketon.

Top EM officials highlighted a variety of accomplishments across the DOE cleanup program and outlined efforts underway to support EM's field sites in continued progress.

"Significant progress is being made because of the men and women hard at work, in the field, every single day at each of our sites," Regalbuto said. "During my tenure as head of the EM program, my focus has been on providing our workers in the field with the leadership and support required for success."

Regalbuto and EM Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Whitney spoke to approximately 600 attendees at the National Cleanup Workshop, held Sept. 14-15 in Alexandria, Va. The workshop, hosted by the Energy Communities Alliance with DOE and the Energy Facility Contractors Group serving as cooperating organizations, brought together senior DOE executives and site officials, industry executives, and other stakeholders to discuss DOE's progress on the cleanup of the environmental legacy of the nation's Manhattan Project and Cold War nuclear weapons program.

Herman Potter, president of United Steelworkers Union Local 689 in Piketon, Ohio, said he was encouraged by initiatives like EM's "Science of Safety," which emphasizes exposing workers to new technology.

"We think that is a fantastic initiative," Potter said. "From my perspective it takes a fresh look on some old types of training. It actually marries what people already know and actually makes it a little bit new. We want to keep doing that."

Regalbuto also cited progress in deactivating and decommissioning the major facility at Hanford, Oak Ridge, and the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#).

In addition, Regalbuto cited completing construction of the Salt Waste Processing Facility at the Savannah River Site and closing the eighth high-level waste tank there as well as continued progress in preparing to resume waste emplacement activities at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant once it is safe to do so; and moving forward with construction of sections of the Hanford Waste Treatment and Immobilization Plant to be used for the Direct Feed Low Activity Waste (DFLAW) approach, intended to allow waste treatment to begin as soon as 2022.

Regalbuto also highlighted a variety of workers across the EM program who provided ideas and input to make their work safer or more efficient. As one example, she discussed how EM's facility representatives at DOE's Idaho Site proposed using better portable computing devices — an idea ultimately implemented at Idaho and other EM sites.

"Often all that is required is a willingness to listen to our men and women in the field and empower them to make a difference — regardless of the individual role they play in the EM mission," Regalbuto said. "In a large organization like ours, we are continuously looking for ways to be more efficient and more successful to allow us to get the mission done at the lowest cost to the taxpayer."

Funding for the D&D project at Piketon recently received funding in Congress's Continuing Resolution (CR). That funding will prevent layoffs and keep the project moving through Dec. 9, 2016.

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A crew is doing asbestos work at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon.