

U.S. Department of Energy's Jeff Avery honors West Valley workforce for dedication to safety



Photo provided

DOE officials gather for a photo in front of the Main Plant Process Building demolition project during a tour of cleanup efforts at EM's West Valley Demonstration Project. From left: Kristen Ellis, EM acting associate principal deputy assistant secretary for EM's Office of Regulatory and Policy Affairs; Stephen Bousquet, assistant director of the West Valley Office of Project Management; Jeff Avery, EM principal deputy assistant secretary; Patrick Hefflinger, EM legislative affairs specialist; Melody Bell, EM Consolidated Business Center assistant director; Cathy Tullis, EM chief of staff; Jennifer Dundas, assistant director of the West Valley Office of Technical Services and Alfred Traylor, director of the DOE Office of Worker Safety and Health Assistance.

DOE's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jeff Avery recently visited the **West Valley Demonstration Project** to observe cleanup progress and meet with employees and key community stakeholders.

A highlight of his trip was an event to celebrate West Valley prime contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley's recent receipt of the DOE Voluntary Protection Program's Star of Excellence.

"The primary importance in **West Valley's** cleanup mission is the men and women in the field who implement the work plans and deliver projects to completion in a safe and compliant manner that meets or exceeds regulations and requirements," Avery said during an address to the **West Valley** workforce. "This can only be achieved because of the tremendous and constant focus on keeping each other safe."

EM West Valley Director Bryan Bower said the site was honored to host Avery.

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"It's important to see the work up close that's being accomplished at the site, and how this work fits into DOE's mission and cleanup strategy," Bower said.

Avery talked with the employees about their careers and future with the cleanup program and met with representatives from the **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority**. EM and CHBWV conduct the **West Valley** cleanup in cooperation with **NYSERDA**.

He also gathered with members of the West Valley Citizen Task Force, comprised of Western New York residents who provide recommendations regarding completion of the **West Valley** cleanup, and closure or long-term management of the site.

Recipients of the Star of Excellence award have achieved an outstanding level of performance in meeting established safety and health goals, actively conducting outreach to others and achieving an injury and illness rate significantly below the average of similar businesses and operations.

"Without you, there would be no cleanup or risk reduction for our communities and the environment. This accomplishment speaks volumes of your abilities to find solutions and use lessons learned to solve some of the most challenging problems we face in reducing legacy risks," Avery said. "This team has proven that difficult, high hazard work can be completed safely. That is no surprise considering this same workforce was one of the first in the DOE-EM complex to achieve VPP Star of Excellence status, an award bestowed upon the safest of the safe DOE sites."

Jennifer Dundas, assistant director of the EM West Valley Office of Technical Services, also thanked the CHBWV employees for their efforts.

"All of you should be proud of this accomplishment and recognition," Dundas said. "This team has demonstrated that safety is paramount at **West Valley**. Your involvement and proactive approach to safety promotes a safety culture that is continuously improving the work environment and reducing risks."

Dundas introduced Alfred Traylor, director of the DOE Office of Worker Safety and Health Assistance, who presented **West Valley** employees with the Star of Excellence plaque for exceeding minimum safety rates and having an overall robust safety program. The site also was recertified as a VPP site.

"I had a tour of the site this morning, and I was quite impressed with the ongoing cleanup efforts, as well as your safety record. This only happens when commitment starts in the field where the work is being done," Taylor said. "The safety and health of our employees, both contractor and federal, are the highest priorities for the Department. DOE's Voluntary Protection Program promotes safety and health excellence through cooperative efforts among labor, management and government at the DOE contractor sites."