

West Valley Innovation Improves Safety, Efficiency and Costs in Cleanup



Demolition equipment using a new automated quick coupler deconstructs the wall of a cell within the Main Plant Process Building at the West Valley Demonstration Project.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. — [EM](#) and its cleanup contractor at the [West Valley Demonstration Project \(WVDP\)](#) used innovative thinking to improve safety and efficiency and save taxpayer money by acquiring new automated tools for demolition equipment.

“The [WVDP](#) team uses diversity, collaboration and inclusion to its advantage when developing innovation solutions during cleanup activities,” EM West Valley Project Management Assistant Director Stephen Bousquet said. “Combining their differences and strengths helps the team improve safety, increase efficiency and reduce costs.”

The new tools, known as quick couplers, feature an advanced automatic coupling system that enables an operator to change quickly between various attachments used in cleanup from inside the cab of an excavator while conducting demolition work on the [Main Plant Process Building](#) at [West Valley](#).



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With this new technology, an operator can change the attachments, such as a hydraulic hammer or shear, within a few seconds without worrying about leaks, kinked hoses, hydraulic issues or misalignment.

Previously, when an operator needed to switch an attachment, the equipment had to be shut down and workers removed the attachment and hydraulic hoses manually. This takes time and exposes workers to industrial and radiological hazards.

During demolition, an operator may change attachments several times per day. This innovative tool increases versatility and efficiency with no oil or hydraulic spills, which saves time and money, and protects the environment.

“Anytime we can improve safety it’s a win-win for everyone. The **WVDP** team is always finding innovative ways to challenge today and reinvent tomorrow,” said Tom Dogal, facility disposition manager with CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, EM’s West Valley cleanup contractor.

The [Main Plant](#) is one of the last major facilities remaining at [West Valley](#). Its successful demolition will further reduce environmental risks and position the site for the next phase in cleanup. The demolition is expected to be completed in the fiscal year that begins this October.

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