



# Hypothetical Scenario Tests Emergency Response at West Valley



**Onsite Training Exercise**

The **West Valley Demonstration Project** recently conducted a full-scale exercise based on a hypothetical incident designed to test the skills and response of onsite and offsite emergency response personnel. Sean Lafferty, radiation control technician, pictured at right, surveys an area for contamination during the exercise. Jon Nehl, radiation protection supervisor, acts as a controller to provide the scenario information and observe Lafferty's response to the hypothetical event.

**WEST VALLEY, N.Y.** – Disasters can occur at any time, and a knowledgeable, well-trained emergency response team can significantly improve the outcome of any event.

That's why the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (<https://www.energy.gov/em/office-environmental-management>) and its cleanup contractor at the **West Valley Demonstration Project** (<https://www.energy.gov/em/west-valley-demonstration-project-wvdp>) recently undertook an exercise in response to a hypothetical emergency scenario. The mock event provided real-world training and constructive feedback for improvement.

Held annually at the **West Valley** site, the large-scale exercise was based on a hypothetical incident involving a contamination event due to sabotage by an insider threat. The exercise was designed to validate the team's response to the unannounced hypothetical incident and its ability to minimize the potential impact on employees, the public and the environment.

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“Exercises allow us to safely test the knowledge and response of our organization through a real-life scenario that includes challenging situations,” said Jennifer Dundas, West Valley’s assistant director of the Office of Technical Services. “We understand the importance and benefit of having trained emergency responders working at West Valley.”

West Valley team members helped develop the scenario and supported the exercise as controllers and evaluators. This included coordinating many tasks to make it more realistic and truly test responders from beginning to end.

Kevin Murray, senior emergency management specialist with West Valley cleanup contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, stressed the importance of being prepared for any situation through training and drills and exercises.

“You can never predict the future or what will happen tomorrow; however, by being prepared, we can effectively deal with any situation to minimize or prevent its impact on people, property and the community,” he said. “This is why we continue to train, learn and evaluate our performance.”

Area firefighters, 911 dispatch center employees and other emergency services representatives took part in the exercise. Several teams and organizations from the site participated, including the Radiological Controls and Environmental departments, Emergency Medical Response Team, Security Force and Operational Response Team, Technical Support Center and Emergency Operations Center. Also joining the mock incident response were employees from DOE headquarters and DOE’s Argonne National Laboratory (<https://www.anl.gov/>), which delivered mock social media and news coverage (<https://etn.anl.gov/>).

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-Contributor: Joseph Pillittere