

Documents Released under FOIA Show Disregard for Safety

In April the Department of Energy (DOE) released a few more documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) related to the Advanced Test Reactor (ATR). Initially, DOE had denied the Environmental Defense Institute (EDI) access to these particular documents claiming “trade secrets” exemption under FOIA. This is the equivalent of Ford Motor denying access to safety reports on its 1966 Fairlane car (the age equivalent of the ATR).

After EDI went through the lengthy (more than a year) appeal process, DOE subsequently released **some** of the requested documents. These recently released reports include; “Safety Rod Drive clutch plates that are part of the Safety Rod System, a reactivity [sic] control mechanism:” the only reactor shutdown control mechanism. In an apparent cost-cutting effort, DOE is **not** testing ATR replacement parts to ensure they are compliant with current required American Society Mechanical Engineers (ASME) standards until they are needed.

In “plain-speak” if there is an earthquake and/or a malfunction of crucial safety systems due to Safety Rod Drive failure, the ATR operators may lose the ability to shutdown the reactor which could then cause a meltdown and resultant release of radioactivity to the atmosphere. In an accident scenario, there will be no time to test replacement parts for ASME compliance. Replacement parts are a major issue with respect to a 40-year-old nuclear reactor that has emergency shutdowns multiple times every year due to equipment malfunctions!

DOE documents state; “The revision to this CGI [Commercial Grade Item] is to **eliminate** the ‘performance characteristic’ item of the CGI dedication plan as requirement for staging clutch plates in the warehouse. Initially this material was for direct installation. Now, material is to be staged in the warehouse for future use without providing proof of ‘performance characteristics’, however, proof of ‘performance characteristics’ will be provided upon installation of any new clutch plates.”¹ [emphasis added]

In essence, DOE has suspended its previous “commercial grade” requirement for the most crucial mechanism for emergency shutdown of the ATR. Given the long history of ATR safety rod drive malfunctions,²

are we, the public, to believe that if the ATR has an emergency scram (shutdown), and the safety rod drives (only mechanism for shutdown) fail, that operators will take the time to conduct time consuming “performance characteristics” testing or will they just grab what is on the warehouse shelf to get the ATR shutdown hoping the clutches work mitigating a melt-down.

Additionally, we do not know at this time how many other ATR replacement parts are also non-compliant. There is no credible reason for this dangerous cost-cutting action given the enormous consequences of a major ATR accident. We don’t know because DOE (even after appeal) refuses to release most of the documents EDI requested claiming “national security” exemption under FOIA.

EDI’s joint lawsuit with Keep Yellowstone Nuclear Free and David McCoy against DOE for release of ATR “life extension plan” documents is languishing in Wyoming Federal District Court since filing in 2006.³ We do NOT know about the ATR safety issues because DOE continues to block document release.⁴

As previously emphasized, the only “security threat” in jeopardy here is DOE’s credibility to safely operate the antiquated 40 year-old Advanced Test Reactor that is still operating long after its original 20-year design life. We do not want another Three-Mile-Island accident here in Idaho.

More currently, DOE/Idaho 5/4/09 Operations Summary states the following:

* April 13: A facility representative doing a routine inspection in the second basement at the Advanced Test Reactor discovered an energized control panel with the cover removed, no workers in attendance and no barriers in place. An access barrier was placed around the panel to prevent access, management was notified and a critique was held.

Schooner. [Request No. 4c] Regulating Rod (Reg Rod); “During removal of the reg rods one of the followers detached and fell into the tank...due to heavy corrosion. The new reg rod followers, however, are chrome plated and can be expected to experience the same failure mechanism. The metallurgical evaluation suggests that within two to three years the reg rod followers should be replaced with a different metal such as zircaloy.” [pg.5]

³ Keep Yellowstone Nuclear Free, Environmental Defense Institute, et al, v Department of Energy, Complaint, Wyoming Federal District Court, Case No. 06-CV-205-D.

⁴ For more information on revelations on ATR documents, see EDI’s Newsletters 2009 January to April available at: <http://environmental-defense-institute.org/publications.html>.

¹ Commercial Grade Item Dedication Plan, CGI-303 Revision 1, 2/28/05.

² Interoffice Memorandum, INL, March 29, 2005, Plant Systems Engineering Review for Facility Certification No.29, From D.J.

* April 16: A routine review of safety documentation at the ATR-Critical Facility raised a question as to whether adequate controls are in place to ensure the safety of the ATR-Critical Facility workers during a radioactive material release from the facility in the event of a fire.

* April 16: While conducting a routine update of safety documents at the ATR-Critical Facility, an inconsistency was identified in the testing requirements for ensuring that a safety system is operable. Further review of the issue is underway.

Last month, DOE/Idaho announced the creation of a new Center for Materials Science of Nuclear Fuel, a multi-million dollar program for construction in Idaho Falls. “The Center’s research will focus on uncovering the reasons why certain materials used in nuclear reactors behave the way they do. After being exposed to radiation for extended periods of time, certain materials tend to deteriorate. INL’s Advanced Test Reactor (ATR) will be an important tool for the center to test its work. This New Center Facility at the Idaho National Laboratory also announced an agreement that will bring a \$48 million, 131,000-square foot building to its Idaho Falls ‘campus.’ The new Research and Education Laboratory will be the newest addition to the INL’s Idaho Falls campus, joining the recently-constructed Center for Advanced Energy Studies, which was dedicated in February.”⁵

This is an excellent example of; “If your pet program’s mission is in jeopardy, create a new mission and use taxpayer dollars to fund it.” This is a clear case of economic “addiction” to all things nuclear that perpetuate these INL nuclear economic interests in maintaining the ATR’s continued operation.

This is tragically ironic when DOE is currently denying EDI/KYNF’s Freedom of Information Act requests (as noted above) for documents related to ATR’s deteriorating crucial safety systems due to aging of this 40-year old reactor. DOE also fought and won EDI/KYNF’s legal effort to force DOE to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement on extending the ATR’s operations to 2014 and beyond.⁶

Moreover, DOE must be forced to focus on current under-funded cleanup of INL’s 60-year legacy waste that continues to contaminate the Snake River Aquifer underlying INL and inadequate emission controls of incineration of liquid high-level waste from its tank farm and other transuranic liquid wastes at INL from decontaminating old nuclear fuel storage units.⁷

DOL Secretary Solis Must Protect Whistleblowers Now!

For years whistleblowers and the public have suffered under an Administrative Review Board (ARB) that is openly hostile to employee whistleblowers. Since the previous administration appointed new ARB members in 2001, the Board has limited the kinds of adverse actions whistleblowers can challenge, raised the burdens of proof, used technicalities to trip up whistleblowers, and limited their recoveries in the few cases they do win.

More than any other court or agency, the ARB has narrowed the employee protection provisions of Sarbanes-Oxley making it ineffective at encouraging Wall Street whistleblowers to come forward. To make matters worse, in the past few weeks the ARB has issued five decisions that directly contradict the Board’s mandate to protect whistleblowers from retaliation.

Department of Labor Secretary Solis has the power to appoint new members of the ARB without Senate confirmation. Numerous qualified experts have already interviewed for the positions. However, it has been seven weeks since Secretary Solis’ confirmation and we still do not have a new ARB.

There is no reason why Secretary Solis cannot step up to protect whistleblowers now. Tell Secretary Solis that these courageous whistleblowers and the Americans they are protecting will continue to suffer until a new ARB is appointed.

Since Secretary Solis was confirmed, there have been five decisions by the Administrative Review Board (ARB) that go directly against the purpose of protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. The ARB case numbers are 08-053, 07-111, 07-095, 07-056, and 07-079. These ARB decisions are just another example of broken system that is openly hostile to employee whistleblowers.

Therefore, it is imperative that Solis immediately appoint new members of the ARB. Since these members can be appointed without Senate confirmation this is one step that Solis can take now to show that you value the contributions whistleblowers make to society and intend on protecting them from retaliation. These courageous whistleblowers and the Americans they are protecting will continue to suffer with decisions like these until Solis appoint a new ARB.

The National Whistleblowers Center (NWC) and the National Whistleblower Legal Defense and Education Fund (NWLDEF) provide direct assistance and the information that you need to protect yourself. Communications are protected to the maximum extent under law by attorney-client and work product privilege.

⁵ DOE Idaho Operations Summary, May 4, 2009.

⁶ U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho Eastern Division Complaint, Case No. 07-36. See EDI website publications for the full text of this Complaint. <http://environmental-defense-institute.org> Also incomplete Environmental Defense Institute FOIA request to OE/Idaho 1/06 and 08.

⁷ See EDI’s August-September 2008 Newsletter.

Our confidential reporting program permits whistleblowers to disclose potential wrongdoing or retaliation. Staff attorneys of the National Whistleblower Legal Defense and Education Fund review the report. It is the single best method to have your claim or concerns reviewed quickly, and obtain direct advice on how to proceed.

This is a confidential free service for whistleblowers. Your intake form is reviewed and the NWLDEF attempts to provide a referral to an attorney with expertise in the issues you have disclosed and/or with offices close to your home.

For more information, contact the Government Accountability Project, National Whistleblower Center; 1612 K St. NW # 1100, Washington, DC 20006, 202-408-0034; <http://whistleblower.org>

Settlement Talk Emerges in Hanford Downwinder Case

Spokesman Review Spokane, WA reports 4/22/09; "The lead lawyer for government contractors in the long-running Hanford downwinders lawsuit says his companies are ready to offer cash settlements to some of the more than 2,000 people who believe their illnesses were caused by radiation released from the nuclear reservation.

Attorney Kevin Van Wart, of Chicago, who represents Hanford contractors E.I. DuPont De Nemours & Co. and General Electric Co., said his clients were willing to settle some claims of people exposed to the most radiation, The Spokesman-Review reported. He spoke at a status conference on the 18-year-old lawsuit, hosted by U.S. District Judge William Nielsen on Tuesday. "This case has been caught on dead center for too long," Nielsen told the attorneys. "Let's come up with something so we can proceed."

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit contend they suffered cancer and other illnesses as a result of living downwind of releases of radioactive iodine-131 from the Department of Energy reservation in south-central Washington. The releases occurred as plutonium was being produced for nuclear weapons during World War II and the Cold War.

Residents of Eastern Washington and parts of Oregon and Idaho didn't know about the releases until the U.S. Department of Energy declassified documents in 1986. Van Wart noted a ruling by Nielsen that any exposure to 40 rads or less of radiation requires speculation about whether it caused illnesses. The vast majority of those exposed to Hanford radiation claim they were exposed to less than 40 rads. "We think any exposure to less than 40 rads should be dismissed. If people have a 5 percent chance that exposure caused their condition, we will go to court every time," Van Wart said. "We do believe that some claims are

more meritorious than others and should be settled. We will make individual offers. We will see if the plaintiffs find them appealing."

Louise Roselle, lead attorney for the downwinders, welcomed settlement offers. "Over the last 20 years, the DOE has hidden behind Mr. Van Wart and the defendants. As long as they are being paid for all their expenses, why would they settle?" Roselle asked.

The government has spent about \$57 million to defend the contractors. Attorneys on both sides argued about how to place the plaintiffs into smaller, more manageable groups, and about how to estimate the doses of radiation people received. Nielsen implored the attorneys to work together. "We are trying to work toward a sensible way to resolve all these cases," Nielsen said. "It's good for you, your clients and the public to see this thing through."

J. Preston Truman Director of the Downwinders organization analysis of the above Hanford Settlement notes; "And then there is the BIG PICTURE question I have with this all. Hey, the biggest effect the "downwinders" of Hanford suffered, versus the workers, was the deliberate I-131 releases. Those [Judge Nielsen's ruling] of 40 rads can't be the thyroid dose which would have been like ours [Nevada Test Site Down-winders] close to 1,000 or higher; and the I-131 releases from Hanford were a bit more than equal as I see it.

"And even a 40 rad whole body is not what it appears because of the internal doses of various isotopes on specific organs or tissues, and then 40 rads is 40 rads and way too hot for people who do not get to chose their exposures, agree to them, or receive goods, services, or payment for their agreeing to be exposed. Civilians exposed in these things have NO BUSINESS being forced to accept the worker standards or to even be exposed to the lower 5 rem [DOE worker limit] per year in my opinion. Why we bitched and still do on 'no radiation without representation!'"

"Personally I see this [Judge Nielsen's ruling] of a 40 rad at best as minus the organ and tissue specific internal doses, especially the well documented I-131 doses, the 40 rads, which to those not educated might sound like a good place to stop covering, cuts way to many, if not the vast bulk of those exposed! IF it is a whole body doses, then IF it was applied to the [National Cancer Institute] NCI's I-131 exposures few if any of those with cooked, burnt, and cremated thyroids of 1000 plus exposures wouldn't be eligible simply because their whole body doses from their exposures were less than 40 rads!"

Editors Note; DOE's worker exposure limit is 5 rads/rem which is dangerously high. EPA's limit for general public is 5 milli-rem (0.005 rem). Again Judge Neilson's application of 40 rad (if correct) is a lethal dose not "speculative." For more information contact <http://downwinders.org>

Chernobyl Fallout Affected Unborn Babies

Will Boggs, MD reports in *Reuters Health* 4/22/09 ; "Babies that were exposed in the womb to radioactive iodine after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident have had an increased risk of developing thyroid cancer in the ensuing 20 years, according to a new report. Previous studies have linked thyroid cancer to radioactive iodine from Chernobyl, the authors say, but there's little information on survivors who were exposed before they were born. Dr. Maureen Hatch from the National Cancer Institute in Rockville, Maryland, and colleagues evaluated the risks of thyroid cancer and other thyroid diseases in 1494 children born to mothers who were pregnant at the time of the accident, compared with 1088 children of mothers who became pregnant when fallout was no longer present.

Screening revealed six cases of thyroid cancer and one precancer in the contaminated group, compared with one case of thyroid cancer in the later group, the investigators report in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

Each unit of radioactivity exposure increased the risk of thyroid cancer about 11-fold, the researchers note. "I would like to do an additional screening of the population in 3-5 years' time to see if the number of cases increases," Hatch said.

There was no apparent increase in the risk of other thyroid diseases related to exposure to radioactive iodine in the womb. The main message from these findings, Hatch commented, is "to be extremely cautious" about the medical use of the radioactive isotope iodine-131 to treat an overactive thyroid in pregnant women.

SOURCE: The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, March 2009.

Regulating Radioactivity: Derision for Uranium Disposal Decision

Judy Fahys reports in the *Salt Lake Tribune* 4/14/09: "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission assured Rep. Jim Matheson and other Congress members it will stay true to its commitment to see that depleted uranium can be disposed of safely in Utah and elsewhere. But the agency doesn't detail how it reached its decision to stick to its 1981 system, which treats depleted uranium as "Class A" waste, the standard category for the least hazardous low-level waste.

Matheson, of Utah, and Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., hope

to find at least some of those answers in the thousands of pages of documents that they have requested from NRC and that are due next Monday. Markey, the chairman of the House energy and environment subcommittee, likened the NRC's handling of depleted uranium to giving a "C" student an "A" grade before the final exam, only in this case the consequences are much more serious and enduring. "When the NRC's normal process is subverted," Markey said in a news release, "it creates confusion and doubt and reduces the trust that the American people have in their regulator."

But, in his April 9 letter, NRC Chairman Dale Klein noted regulators will look closely at the disposal of large quantities of "DU," as it's commonly called, before uranium enrichment facilities begin to need disposal in 2011. "The Commission ... is first and foremost committed to ensuring DU will be disposed of in a manner that protects public health and safety," concludes a memo attached to Klein's letter.

Last month the congressmen demanded more information about the agency's March 18 decision on depleted uranium. They want to know more about why the agency is continuing to use a category that some have described as a loophole that could potentially allow too-dangerous waste to be permanently buried in low-level waste sites, like Energy Solutions Inc.'s specialized landfill in Tooele County.

Depleted uranium, the radioactive material left over from nuclear fuel enrichment and old government stockpiles, is unusual for low-level waste because it actually gets hotter over time. The hazard increases, the NRC says, "Until after 1 million years" because of the increasing concentration of radioactive decay products and their increasing mobility.

Regulators said they plan two further reviews to make sure that more than 11 tons can be disposed of safely in one place. One is revamping radioactive waste classification system to focus on the risks posed by various forms of waste. The other is a standard for site-specific reviews that would, in effect, help regulators decide how suitable Utah and other locales would be for large volumes of depleted uranium.

The total U.S. waste stream of depleted uranium is about 1.4 million tons, roughly half from government stockpiles and half from anticipated uranium enrichment. "Class A waste was meant to be the lowest classification -- one that poses the least threat to health and safety," said Matheson. "Any decision regarding depleted uranium disposal that raises concerns in that regard is not acceptable to me."

Jill Sigal, spokeswoman for Energy Solutions, said the company already has done a site-specific review for depleted uranium and has been disposing it since 1990. "We safely dispose of Class A material," she said. "Class A

material includes depleted uranium. ... We will comply with all regulations."

Dane Finerfrock, director of the state's Radiation Control Division, said the upcoming reviews were important to make sure there is no doubt that sites like Energy Solutions would keep the waste safe over the long run. 'It's a great opportunity for some things to get worked out' from a technical standpoint, he said."

Inspectors Find Safety Problems at Nuclear Weapons Complex

James Rosen reports in the *McClatchy News* ;
 "Contractors at one of the nation's major nuclear weapons complexes repeatedly used substandard construction materials and components that could have caused a major radioactive spill, a recently completed internal government probe has found.

One of the materials used at the Savannah River Site on the South Carolina-Georgia border failed to meet federal safety standards and "could have resulted in a spill of up to 15,000 gallons of high-level radioactive waste," the Energy Department's inspector general found.

The inspector general's five-month investigation also found that contractors bought 9,500 tons of substandard steel reinforcing bars for the Savannah River Site near Aiken, S.C. The faulty steel was discovered after a piece of it broke during the construction of a facility to convert spent nuclear weapons-grade plutonium and uranium into mixed-oxide, or MOX, fuel for civilian reactors.

Replacing 14 tons of substandard rebar - the steel bars commonly used to reinforce concrete - that already had been installed cost \$680,000 and delayed the completion of the \$4.8 billion MOX facility, the investigation found. Among the other questionable components the probe found were piping, steel plates, an unusable \$12 million "glovebox" used to handle radioactive materials, furnace module doors and robots that are used to avoid human exposure to radiological and chemical materials.

In an April 23 memo to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Inspector General Gregory Friedman said contractors and subcontractors that build, supply and install equipment at the Savannah River facilities ignored safety regulations developed by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. "We identified multiple instances in which critical components did not meet required quality and safety standards," Friedman wrote to Chu.

The DOE inspector general's probe found instances of hiring Savannah River Site subcontractors who sold standard commercial materials instead of the required military-grade components, which are subjected to tougher testing during production under higher standards. One commercial subcontractor sold goods through retail

catalogues.

While the investigation focused on contractors and subcontractors, it also said the Energy Department failed to supervise them adequately and demand that they meet established safety standards.

Friedman's investigators, who were at Savannah River from Sept. 30, 2008, to April 8, examined a representative sample of 10 government purchases and found safety problems with all of them. "The department did not provide adequate oversight of the prime contractors' quality-assurance programs at Savannah River," the report found. "Particularly, the department did not adequately establish and implement processes to detect and/or prevent quality problems."

The Savannah River Site produced tritium, Plutonium-239 and other materials used to make nuclear weapons from 1954 to 1991, when the U.S. stopped making nuclear weapons at the end of the Cold War. Scientists and technicians at the Savannah River Site, one of several massive nuclear complexes around the country, still replenish tritium that's needed to maintain the United States' existing nuclear weapons.

The Savannah River Site is a large regional employer with about 10,000 workers, down from a peak of 25,000 in 1992. Many employees are engaged in a huge environmental cleanup effort to alleviate the effects of decades of toxic nuclear waste production.

President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic-stimulus plan has \$1.6 billion to accelerate the Savannah River Site cleanup, and hundreds of new workers already have been hired. Officials with the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Energy Department agency responsible for maintaining and securing the nation's nuclear weapons, disputed the findings. "NNSA agrees with the recommendations presented in the report but does not agree with the stated conclusions concerning the safety of the facilities, related cost impacts or with the tone of the report," wrote William Ostendorff, its principal deputy administrator. Ostendorff said the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had done a more extensive probe of safety issues at the MOX facility, one of three examined by the inspector general, and had concluded that the problems were "violations of low significance."

The heads of the Energy Department's Office of Environmental Management, which is in charge of waste cleanup at the Savannah River Site and other nuclear complexes, didn't dispute the inspector general's findings, however. "The issues identified in this report represent a failure of contractors and subcontractors to properly implement existing requirements and policies," wrote Ines Triay, the acting assistant secretary for environmental management. 'Environmental Management agrees that current practices can and should be enhanced to provide greater federal and contractor oversight,' Triay wrote."

Thyroid Cancer Increasing, Scientists Baffled

Newsmax reports May 5, 2009 “It’s a medical mystery that has been developing for at least a decade: thyroid cancer—not breast, prostate, lung, or colon cancer—is the fastest increasing cancer among women and men in the United States, and scientists don’t know why.

In fact, according to new data from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), thyroid cancer diagnoses have increased at a rate of 6.5 percent a year from 1997 to 2006. The alarming trend has largely gone unnoticed. Now, a new project by American University’s Investigative Reporting Workshop—an organization founded by journalism professors Charles Lewis and Wendell Cochran at AU’s School of Communication—is helping shine a light on the issue.

The project—composed of more than four original stories, several video interviews, and a fact sheet—pulls together the various medical research pieces of the thyroid cancer increase puzzle. It includes data from the NCI, the American Thyroid Association, the Mayo Clinic, and numerous published studies.

Caroline Stetler, an AU journalism graduate student and a Workshop staff writer, spearheaded the project, which is available on the Workshop’s Web site. She found that as recently as three years ago, some researchers thought the increase in diagnoses could be explained by improved methods of detection; ultrasound, not widely used in hospitals until the early 1980s, has allowed physicians to find cancerous thyroid nodules smaller than 1 centimeter. “There is now proof the increasing rate is not just a reflection of improved detection,” said Stetler, a survivor of thyroid cancer. “But researchers say they really don’t know what is causing the increase.”

Scientists are pointing to factors such as heredity, chemical pollutants, diet, obesity, and increased radiation exposure via CT scans. Stetler’s research for the project led her to a study published in the March issue of the journal *Cancer Epidemiology and Biomarkers and Prevention*. The study, coauthored by Dr. Elaine Ron, a senior investigator at NCI, focused on papillary cancer—the most common type of thyroid cancer, increasing consistently among all racial and ethnic groups. Ron and her coauthors found that from 1980 to 2005, the number of larger tumors—those bigger than at least 2 centimeters—increased, disproving the improved detection theory as tumors of this size are generally found during a physical neck exam, not during ultrasound or other image screening tests.

Despite the unexplained increase in thyroid cancer, the illness is highly treatable and the majority of people diagnosed with it survive; the mortality rate has remained

stable at 0.5 percent per year. Stetler’s project began last fall as an assignment for the In-depth Reporting class, offered by AU’s School of Communication and taught by Workshop Executive Editor Charles Lewis. “This is the first student project the Workshop has published,” Wendell Cochran, senior editor, said. “We think it sheds light on a large and growing health issue that has, unfortunately, received little coverage by journalists.”

For more information see; “Rising thyroid cancer incidence in the United States by demographic and tumor characteristics, 1980–2005” Published in final edited form as: Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev. 2009 March ; 18(3): 784–791. doi:10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-08-0960.

DOE 2010 Fiscal Year Budget “Great News” for INL

Suzanne Hobbs reports 5/7/09; “U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu detailed President Barack Obama’s 26.4 billion dollar fiscal year 2010 budget request for the Department of Energy. That budget proposal includes more than one billion dollars for operating the INL.

The president has said he wants to end our dependence on foreign oil, restore scientific leadership and put Americans back to work through a new green energy economy. What is the impact of that budget and those goals on the Idaho National Laboratory? Dennis Miotla, the Interim Manager for the Idaho Operations Office says it’s great news for the lab. There are changes coming and that means more work and more jobs.

Miotla says all the programs at the INL will be funded and at a much higher level but with a shift in the type of work. “So what the effect is that instead of the dollars that are in the budget going more towards industry and deployment they’re really moving towards laboratory directed R and D, which is good news for the INL and actually a lot of DOE labs. INL will probably be the lead for most of the activities in the budget.”

And for the clean-up work at the Idaho Site, the budget numbers are good at 411 million dollars, and add to that the extra 50 million dollars given in the ‘09 budget and on top of the recently announced 468 million under the stimulus package. Richard Provencher is the Deputy Manager of the DOE clean up work. He says there will be no layoffs and in fact, more than 300 new jobs will be created.

Richard Provencher: “The combination of the three allows us to restore the funding on the contracts, as well as accelerate the clean-up on site so we can survive with the 411 million and not skip a beat. That’s good funding level for us and allows us to continue to do the work out here in a safe compliant manner.”

Miotla also says the budge asks for 30 million dollars to produce Plutonium-238. It’s a material NASA uses to power their deep space missions. Miotla says the Advanced

Test Reactor would be used for this. Another bit of excitement is the INL will have two of the nation's eight "Energy Innovation Hubs" Miotla says these are five year projects where All of this is still up to congress to approve."

NASA's deep space missions gets new Fuel

The Energy Department has requested \$30 million to re-launch a program to make radioactive plutonium-238, the supply of which is running low.

John Johnson reports in the *LA Times* 5/8/09; "The Energy Department plans to restart its program of making radioactive fuel for NASA's deep space missions, the agency announced Thursday, a decision that came only hours after the National Research Council warned that the nation was fast running out of the fuel.

Jen Stutsman, a spokeswoman for the department, said the agency had requested \$30 million in its fiscal 2010 budget proposal to restart the fuel-making process. In its budget statement, the agency said it had "a long and successful history" of supporting NASA's needs. It said it welcomed the National Research Council findings.

In a 74-page report titled "Radioisotope Power Systems" the council pointed out that American leadership in space has depended in part on the ability to power spacecraft on deep space missions, in which the sun's rays are too weak for generating solar power.

The RPGs make electricity with the heat from the radioactive decay of small amounts of plutonium-238 carried on board.

NASA uses about 11 pounds of Pu-238 each year. In recent years, it has purchased some of the material from Russia, but unless it makes new Pu-238, McNutt said, NASA will run out by the end of the next decade. That will leave enough fuel to power only the upcoming Mars Science Lab. and outer planet missions, he said.

Last year, then-NASA Administrator Michael Griffin wrote a letter to the Energy Department pointing out the need for more plutonium. "We could ramp back up," McNutt said. But it won't be an overnight process. He estimated it could cost \$150 million to make the fuel-manufacturing process operational.

Editors note; DOE's Advanced Test Reactor at INL produces Pu-238 for these programs and as shown above have production hazards. The European Union realized years ago that nuclear power of its space vehicles was too dangerous because they eventually fall back to earth spreading plutonium into the atmosphere and now the EU uses solar panels to supply power to its satellites and other space programs.

Nuclear Arms Workers Dying While Fighting US Govt.

Books of Hearts reports 5/10/09; "Recently, President Obama announced his intention to rid the world of nuclear weapons. This is a very worthy goal. Almost daily, we hear about the threat of nuclear proliferation. But little is said about the tens of thousands of US workers who are suffering and dying prematurely due to toxic exposure to radiation, heavy metals and other poisons they received while working in nuclear facilities making or cleaning up after these weapons. Over half a million people worked during the Cold War and WWII to build atomic bombs. 165,000 of them or their survivors have filed claims with the US Government- Department of Labor. Only 1 in 4 have been compensated.

Tens of thousands of sick nuclear arms workers - or their survivors - from every state in the nation have applied for compensation that Congress established for them in 2000. But most have never seen a dime. For half a century, the federal government's official policy was to fight any workers who claimed job-related illness, often spending tens of millions in tax dollars annually to do so. The government at times absolutely denied that the workers faced undue danger. It was a flat-out lie. Unbelievably, \$90 million was spent in the first four years, but only 32 people were reimbursed. In order to decrease costs, the Bush administration in August 2006 created a "no-pay" list that included 77 diagnoses they claimed had no link to toxic exposure. But journalists at the Rocky did a simple search of an Internet database of disease studies compiled by doctors for the nonprofit Collaborative on Health and the Environment. They found strong links of exposure to the following cancers: breast, gallbladder, pancreas, prostate, and salivary gland. There were also strong links to diabetes mellitus and rheumatoid arthritis. In 2005, the labor department's top compensation program official was personally alerted to the database by Richard Miller, who was then at the Government Accountability Project in Washington, D.C. Interestingly, about one month prior to the Rocky's publication of this information, the "no-pay" policy was rescinded.

Congressional hearings held in 2006 revealed efforts by the Bush White House to decrease costs by denying compensation to workers. Labor department officials testified that these efforts were abandoned."

For the full story see;

<http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2009/5/10/729607/-Nuclear-Workers-Dying-While-Fighting-US-Govt/>