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Recovery Act means cleaner environment at DOE's Paducah Site

The environment at the U.S. Department of Energy's Paducah Site grows safer, thanks to nearly \$79 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

A 200,000-square-foot complex known as the old Feed Plant operated from 1957 to 1977 to make uranium hexafluoride and fluorine. Recovery Act workers, who are cleaning up the contaminated complex to prepare it for demolition in late 2011 or early 2012, achieved their latest milestone January 7 after eight months of efforts.

Workers used heavy equipment to finish removing hundreds of feet of paper-insulated, lead-cased cable that supplied the Feed Plant with high-voltage electricity. The cable is the diameter of a fire hose and weighs nearly 15 pounds per foot.

Mechanized tuggers pulled the cable out of large conduit that ran from manholes through the building slab into the basement and up to electrical rooms. Wearing protective suits and respirators, workers cut the cable into shorter sections for waste storage. They removed about 1,000 feet of cable, weighing nearly 15,000 pounds packaged.

Supervisor Bridgid Mills led a team of electricians, mechanics and operators with support from engineering, crane operators, and hoisting and rigging crews.

Recovery Act workers have nearly finished asbestos abatement in the Feed Plant, having previously removed the insulating material from about 41,000 feet of piping and 9,000 square feet of tanks and equipment. Workers also took out about 30,000 square feet of hazardous hydrogen fluoride, fluorine, and other systems in the eastern end of the complex; this could cover nearly half a football field.

A 65,000-square-foot complex known as the Metals Plant is slated for summer 2011 demolition. Used from the early 1950s to the early 1970s to convert depleted uranium hexafluoride into uranium metal and uranium tetrafluoride, it had been one of the site's most contaminated structures.

In December, Recovery Act personnel completed removing a magnesium fluoride system from the Metals Plant. Front Line Supervisor Chris Stewart's crew devised a way of placing the waste directly into proper shipping containers. That efficient process eliminated double-handling and helped workers finish the job five months ahead of schedule.

So far, about \$50 million in Recovery Act funds have been spent at Paducah. Aside from cleaning up the environment, the work expedites removal of old buildings with no reuse potential.

“That makes more land available for potential reuse or re-industrialization in the future,” said Rob Seifert, DOE Recovery Act Project Manager at the Paducah Site.



Recovery Act workers remove asbestos from the C-410 Feed Plant to prepare it for demolition in late 2011 or early 2012.



Recovery Act workers in January finished an eight-month project of removing heavy lead-based electrical cable (above) from the old Feed Plant at DOE's Paducah Site. Workers cut the cable into shorter, manageable sections (below) for waste storage.

