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U.S. Department of Energy and Bechtel Hanford Inc. Receive \$5,000 Penalty for Hanford Dangerous Waste Law Violations Resulting in Flying Drum Lid

LACEY -- The U.S. Department of Energy and a Hanford contractor have been fined \$5,000 for hazardous waste violations including an incident when pressure built up inside a drum resulting in the drum lid popping into the air, narrowly missing workers.

The violations by Energy and Bechtel Hanford Inc. were based on Washington Department of Ecology inspections last fall of cleanup involving the four 183-H Solar Evaporation Basins, located along the southern shore of the Columbia River in the Hanford Site's north-central area.

Last operated in 1985, the basins stored and treated radioactive and chemically dangerous wastes generated in 300 Area fuel fabrication facilities. The basins are to be demolished, and their contaminated soil removed from the site or buried and capped in place under terms of a state permit issued in 1994.

"The key violation was the lack of worker training for the closure operations," said Mike Wilson, manager of Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program. "Workers had not been adequately trained to carry out waste packaging according to the state's permit."

He said Ecology inspectors also found the inadequate and inaccurate record-keeping of 183-H cleanup waste violated state regulations.

"These training and labeling problems culminated in an incident last September in which two Hanford workers narrowly avoided injury when they attempted to open an incorrectly labeled drum and its lid blew off because of container pressure," Wilson said.

Bechtel and USDOE may appeal to Ecology to reduce or cancel the penalty, or they may contest the penalty through an appeal to the Washington Pollution Control Hearings Board.

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