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NRC NAMES ON-SITE REPRESENTATIVE
FOR HANFORD TANK WASTE REMEDIATION PROJECT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has assigned a full-time representative to the Hanford Site outside Richland, Wash., where the Department of Energy (DOE) is developing a program for immobilizing highly radioactive waste currently contained in underground tanks.

Dr. Walter J. Pasciak, a 24-year NRC veteran, began his duties in late July at Hanford, first established in World War II and once used for the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons. Dr. Pasciak is a member of a Hanford Tank Waste Remediation System Section that NRC created last year within its Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards.

The NRC assigned an on-site representative to Hanford as part of its work with an independent regulatory unit that DOE created at its Richland Operations Office for the tank waste project. During the current first phase of a program to privatize the Hanford tank clean-up work, NRC is assisting the DOE regulatory unit in patterning its oversight of contractors in a manner consistent with the NRC's regulatory approach.

An important goal of this first phase is to develop an effective regulatory program that could be put into effect in the second phase, about 2005. A final decision may be made then for the NRC to assume regulatory oversight of the DOE contractor selected for the Tank Waste Remediation System clean-up work.

The NRC is now working to increase its knowledge and understanding of the site tank farms, their associated hazards and potential remediation processes. NRC and DOE interactions during this initial phase are governed by a memorandum of understanding signed in January.

Dr. Pasciak spent the last 15 years at NRC Region I in King of Prussia, Pa., where he was a branch chief in the Division of Reactor Projects and a section chief in radiological assessment. Earlier, he served at NRC headquarters in environmental and radiological assessment posts. He holds a Ph.D. in environmental engineering from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md., and a master's degree in nuclear engineering from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Hanford has 177 underground tanks that contain 55 million gallons of waste. Sixty-seven of the tanks are known or suspected to have leaked into the ground.

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