

DOE

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NEWS

MILL TAILINGS CLEANED UP ON 23 LOWMAN PROPERTIES

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare completed cleanup of 23 properties in the vicinity of the inactive Lowman uranium mill tailings site this year, according to DOE Site Manager Paul Mann.

The Lowman site is one of 24 inactive uranium mill tailings sites nationwide being cleaned up by the DOE as part of the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project. Vicinity properties are locations near mill sites where tailings were used in construction or transported by wind or water erosion.

The former Porter Brothers uranium mill at Lowman has been abandoned since 1960. The site covers 35 acres and contains approximately 88,750 cubic yards of radioactive sands scattered over the site.

Contractors for the DOE and Department of Health and Welfare hauled a total of 13,411 cubic yards of contaminated material from nearby properties to the mill site.

Sixteen properties were originally scheduled for cleanup in 1990 at a construction cost estimated at \$1.27 million. Contractors were actually

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able to successfully clean up the 23 properties within the same schedule and budget.

Eleven additional vicinity properties with approximately 15,000 cubic yards of contaminated material are scheduled to be cleaned up in the spring and summer of 1991. The contaminated materials will then be consolidated in a single pile with the radioactive sands on the mill site. The pile will be stabilized in accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for longevity, control of radon emanation and groundwater protection.

MK-Ferguson Company, a subsidiary of Boise-based Morrison-Knudsen Corporation, is the Remedial Action Contractor on the project, managing the overall cleanup effort and arranging for work to be completed by qualified local subcontractors.

The vicinity property cleanup was completed by two Boise, Idaho, subcontractors. Fulfers Environmental Services Inc. cleaned up 15 properties and Masco, Inc. cleaned up eight properties. Approximately 85 percent of the 55 people who worked on the cleanup were Idaho workers, according to Mann.

Mann noted that the successful vicinity property cleanup this summer was the result of cooperation between the DOE and Idaho state leaders. He cited the support of Governor Cecil D. Andrus and the Idaho Legislature as major forces in project success. The state is providing 10 percent of the funding for the cleanup.

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When cleanup began early this past summer, 30 properties were scheduled for remediation over a two-year period. As work progressed, four additional property owners requested inclusion in the vicinity properties cleanup program. Properties cleaned up this year included eight parcels of open land, 14 residential properties and one commercial property. Five commercial properties, five residential properties and one school remain to be cleaned up, along with the mill site itself.

The tailings are radioactive sands left after the milling operations at Lowman were terminated. They contain radium which releases radon gas as it undergoes radioactive decay. Long-term exposure to elevated concentrations of radon is believed to increase the risk of lung cancer.

The UMTRA Project is a key component of Secretary of Energy James D. Watkins' Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Five-Year Plan for cleanup of nuclear-related sites across the country. The project has been a model for successful application of engineering and technology to the protection of the environment and public health.

To date, remedial action has been completed at nine UMTRA Project sites: Canonsburg, Pennsylvania; Shiprock, New Mexico; Salt Lake City and Green River, Utah; Lakeview, Oregon; Tuba City, Arizona; Riverton and Spook, Wyoming, and Durango, Colorado.

The DOE has established a toll-free number for persons desiring additional information about the Lowman tailings cleanup or the UMTRA Project in

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general. The DOE can be reached by calling 1-800-523-6495 (in New Mexico, call 1-800-423-2539). Please leave your name and telephone number, and a project representative will return your call.

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