



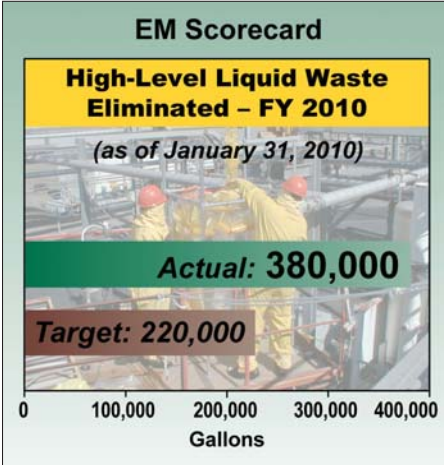
EM UPDATE

Office of Environmental Management



safety ❖ performance ❖ cleanup ❖ closure

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Employee Group Focuses on Improving EM’s Workplace Culture

Finding ways to improve the work experience at a government agency is no easy task, but the 16 members of the Office of Environmental Management’s Working Group on the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS) were willing to tackle that challenge last year.

The group was chartered by EM Assistant Secretary Inés Triay, who has made improving workplace culture a key element of her drive to make EM a high-performing organization.

Led by Jaffer Mohiuddin of EM’s Office of Human Capital and Corporate Services, the group undertook a wide-ranging study of how EM could improve in areas of the work experience that had gotten low marks from its headquarters employees in the 2008 FHCS.



Jaffer Mohiuddin

As they developed their recommendations on how EM can best address the FHCS results, the members of the working group gathered input from EM employees and managers through focus groups and held detailed discussions with other federal agencies that have won high ratings from their employees.

The group presented its recommendations to Triay in December and in January she praised them in her “all hands” address to the EM work force as “absolutely excellent.”

She has asked EM’s senior managers to move ahead with implementing the recommendations and has suggested similar groups be formed to address workplace issues at EM’s field sites around the country.

EM is already putting one of the group’s recommendations into effect by making participation in 360 degree performance reviews mandatory for all of EM’s Senior Executive Service (SES) managers as well as 60 office directors and supervisors.



Jennifer McCloskey

A 360 degree review solicits comments from a manager’s peers and subordinates as well as his or her supervisor. It is intended to be used as a tool for improving their management and leadership skills over time.

While implementing 360 degree reviews was one of the working group’s top recommendations, it had many others. Mohiuddin and Jennifer McCloskey, a member of the group who has briefed EM officials about its recommendations, talked with

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■ 2010 Congressional Nuclear Cleanup Caucus Briefings Begin

EM Assistant Secretary Inés Triay gave a presentation on EM’s program activities on February 24 at the opening session of this year’s series of Congressional Nuclear Cleanup Caucus briefings. The events are organized by Rep. Doc Hastings (R-Wash.), who chairs the bipartisan House Nuclear Cleanup Caucus.

The events focus on discussions of nuclear cleanup issues and are open to members of Congress, staff, the news media and other interested individuals.

Gerald Boyd, the manager of DOE’s Oak Ridge Operations

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EM Update about the recommendations and how they came about.

In the responses EM employees provided to the 2008 FHCS, Mohiuddin explained “there were three areas where there were some concerns.” Those were leadership, communications and performance culture.

“That’s where a lot of the negative scores came,” he said. “So the recommendations are basically addressing those three areas.” And, he said, where the recommendations are critical, they are “critical to improve, not critical to condemn.”

McCloskey, who works for EM’s Office of Construction Project Reviews, said in putting its recommendations together the group interviewed several federal agencies that had good reviews from employees in the 2008 FHCS and, consequently, were ranked high in the 2009 listing of Best Places to Work in the federal government. The Department of Energy placed 19th out of 30 large federal agencies in the rankings.

To develop a stronger performance culture at EM, the group called for developing a “results-oriented performance culture that promotes a diverse, high-performing workforce” and also “ensures that inadequate performance is corrected.”

Agencies the working group interviewed included the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (rated No. 1) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (rated No. 3). The discussions focused on how those agencies handled the areas of leadership, communications and performance culture.

“We asked the team could we apply some of those things here at DOE and usually the consensus was yes. People

on the team had some great ideas on how we could implement some of the things that they [the other agencies] had done to make us even stronger.”

In the area of leadership, one thing the group called for was more transparency about EM’s hiring and promotion processes.

Mohiuddin and McCloskey said the group felt more communication about why hiring and promotion decisions are being made could avoid misunderstandings.

“We think it just helps employees understand the process and builds trust,” said McCloskey.

At NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, she said, employees are given a game plan on their first day on the job on what they need to do to move up to the next level in the organization. “People love that at NASA,” she said.

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Mohiuddin said the highest negative score in responses from EM employees to the 2008 FHCS “was on managers’ inability to deal with poor performers.”

The group’s view, he said, is that managers should be given the training they need to deal with poor performers. Sometimes that may mean finding out whether a person has been assigned to the wrong job or finding new ways to motivate them.

But, he said, “a good organization cannot have poor performers—whatever the reasons—and uplifting poor performers or dealing with them is the prerogative of managers. They should either have the skills to do that, or if not, they should be given the training to do that. That is the message.”

Working Group Members

Project Lead: Jaffer Mohiuddin (EM-71)*	
■ Patricia Baptist, EM-70	■ Wendell Mansel, EM-51
■ Celinda Crawford, EM-11	■ Joann Mason, EM-81
■ Amiya Das, EM-32	■ Jennifer McCloskey, EM-12
■ Matthew Duchesne, EM-41	■ Carolyn Plank, EM-4.1
■ Alton Harris, EM-43	■ Kaye Sylvester, EM-72
■ Gwendolyn Jones, EM-71	■ Tim Walsh, EM-71
■ Theresa Kliczewski, EM-62	■ Mathew Zenkowich, EM-62
■ Connie Lorenz, EM-41	

*The full EM organization chart with the names of all organizational units can be viewed at <http://www.em.doe.gov/Pages/orgstructure.aspx>

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The group also called for more training for EM managers on how to conduct employee appraisals to address inconsistencies in how performance standards are applied from one office to the next. It also recommended training for employees on how appraisals are conducted and what to expect from the process.

McCloskey said it's important to remember that "the whole reason we're doing this is really to increase job satisfaction so that productivity rises and we get a more effective workforce."

The group made a series of recommendations on how to improve communications within EM including giving more attention to internal communications and institutionalizing communications "as a strong part of EM culture."

Earlier this month, in a move she said would encourage "easier communication" throughout EM, Triay appointed Mohiuddin and McCloskey to serve as Ombudsmen charged with acting as intermediaries between employees and senior managers. Mohiuddin will handle these duties at EM's offices in the Forrestal building in Washington, D.C. and McCloskey will do the same at EM's Cloverleaf offices in Germantown, Md.

Mohiuddin said he hopes employees will make use of this new channel for "conveying their suggestions for improvements and their concerns as well."

With all the changes being recommended and made, McCloskey said it's important to remember that "the whole reason we're doing this is really to increase job satisfaction so that productivity rises and we get a more effective workforce."

Mohiuddin agreed, adding, the goal of the recommendations is to help create a workplace in which employees are "engaged...satisfied... [and] doing the maximum that they can do so EM excels in its mission." ■



Going Vertical at Savannah River

An aerial photo taken at the end of January shows the structure of the Salt Waste Processing Facility at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina starting to take shape. As of mid-February, 62 of 73 concrete walls were complete on the \$1.34 billion project which is slated to be completed in 2012.

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office in Tennessee and John Eschenberg, assistant manager for environmental management, gave a presentation at the first of the site-specific caucuses on February 25.

The remaining dates and subjects for site-specific caucuses are: March 4, the Richland Operations Office at Hanford, Wash.; March 11, Idaho National Laboratory; March 16, the Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office covering facilities in Ohio and Kentucky; March 18, the Savannah River Site in South Carolina; and March 25, the Office of River Protection at Hanford, Wash. All of the events will be held in Room 1334 of the Longworth House Office Building.



EM Assistant Secretary Inés Triay talks with Merle Sykes, EM's Chief Business Officer, left, after the opening session of this year's Congressional Nuclear Caucus briefings.



One of the NuPac 125-B casks is prepared for transport into a storage facility.

■ **“Recycled” Casks Advance Wet-to-Dry Fuel Transfers at Idaho**

Two casks that were originally used to transport nuclear fuel debris from the Three Mile Island reactor in Pennsylvania to DOE's Idaho site have been pressed into service once again.

The two NuPac 125-B casks are identical 17-foot-tall stainless steel vessels that have a cast-lead shield sandwiched between the interior and exterior stainless steel walls.

DOE has decided to use the two casks to help move spent nuclear fuel at the site from wet to dry storage.

Since the 1960s, miscellaneous spent nuclear fuel components from various reactors and nuclear research projects around the country have been kept in wet storage at the Idaho site.

Under guidelines set by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, spent nuclear fuel is typically stored in concrete water filled basins for at least five years after

it is removed from a reactor. This is referred to as “wet storage.” After that amount of time has passed, the fuel's radioactivity has been reduced sufficiently to allow it be transferred to “dry storage” in specially constructed casks that can be stored in above ground facilities.

On February 9, the first NuPac 125-B cask was moved into the unloading pool at Idaho where four cask inserts were placed inside it and then loaded with miscellaneous fuel cans in preparation for eventual transfer to dry, interim storage at the Idaho site.

As part of an agreement with the state of Idaho, DOE is committed to moving all spent nuclear fuel at the site from wet to dry storage no later than December 31, 2023.

■ **Extraction Wells Go Wireless at Hanford**

For the first time, groundwater extraction wells at the Hanford Site

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in Washington state are communicating flow rates, water levels and other information wirelessly to a groundwater treatment building. This eliminates the need to string signal cables across highly sensitive or historic areas and generates cost savings in construction as well as ongoing operations and maintenance.

CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company, the cleanup contractor for the central plateau portion of the Hanford site, installed wireless communications towers at three extraction wells. The towers will transmit information to a treatment building near the K Reactors—two former plutonium production reactors.

As a result of this successful demonstration, engineers are now incorporating wireless technology into the designs of new groundwater treatment systems near other reactors.

Pump-and-treat systems use wells to pump contaminated groundwater through pipes to treatment facilities. After contamination is removed at the treatment facility, the treated water is injected into the aquifer through wells outside the area of contamination.

While groundwater at the Hanford Site is not a source of drinking water, contaminants are removed to control their spread to the nearby Columbia River. DOE has committed to containing all chromium contamination along the river in 2012.

■ Contractors Devise an Off-the-Shelf Robotic Tool for Hot Cell Cleanup

One of the biggest cleanup challenges that DOE faces in the River Corridor area of the Hanford Site is the 324 Building. This is because of the shielded hot cells inside the building that contain radioactive tanks, piping and chemical processing equipment.

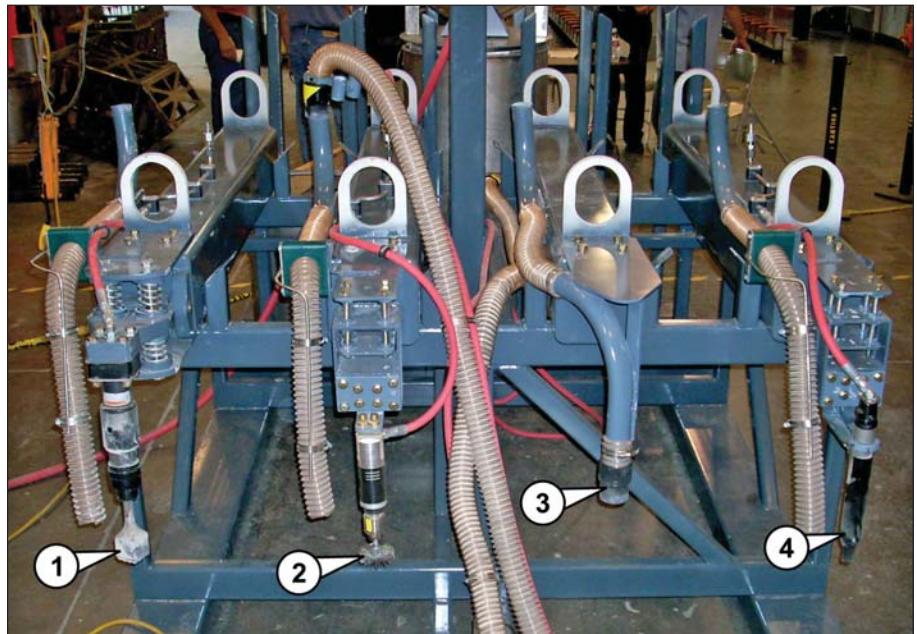
Originally called the Fuel Recycle Pilot Plant, and later known as the Radiochemical Engineering Complex (REC), the 324 Building was built in 1966 for nuclear material research and radioactive waste treatment process development and demonstration.

B-Cell is the largest of the 324 Building's four hot cells—rooms where radioactive materials were handled by workers shielded by five-foot thick concrete walls and stainless steel lining.

Radiation levels are so extreme inside B-Cell that it would take only minutes for workers to exceed exposure limits. So Washington Closure, the cleanup contractor for the River Corridor area, teamed with S.A. Robotics of Loveland, Colo., to develop a remote-controlled set of tools to do demolition work inside the cell.

The two contractors designed and adapted commercially available air-driven tools to create a tool rack for removing hazardous grout from the cell's floor trench and sump area.

The tool rack incorporates a chisel with a brushing head that acts as a jackhammer, a needle scaler for removing small sections of grout, a wire brush and a high-efficiency vacuum.



The highlighted items in the photo are (1) chisel tool (2) wire brush tool (3) vacuum nozzle tool and (4) needle scaler.