

WEST VALLEY SITE

Teardown of Main Plant Processing Building begins

The Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management (EM) said it met one of its cleanup priorities for 2022 by beginning demolition of the Main Plant Process Building (MPPB) at the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) in New York. Located 35 miles south of Buffalo, the 150-acre WVDP site is home to the only commercial spent nuclear fuel reprocessing facility to operate in the United States.

According to EM, removal of the Main Plant, which was used to recover reusable plutonium and uranium from reprocessed spent fuel, further reduces environmental risks and positions the site for the next phase of cleanup. Teardown of the MPPB, one of West Valley’s last remaining major facilities, is expected to be completed by spring 2025.

According to EM, its WVDP workforce conducted significant work over the past two decades to prepare the five-story, 35,100-square-foot reinforced concrete building for demolition. Workers safely reduced radioactivity in the facility by over 98 percent by removing more than seven miles of contaminated piping and over 50 tons of contaminated equipment. They also used liquid nitrogen—up to 60,000 pounds per square inch—as part of an aggressive yet safe cleaning application. Workers completed those activities in August 2022, allowing for the demolition to begin the following month.

Operating from 1963 to 1972, WVDP processed 640 metric tons of spent fuel and generated over 600,000 gallons of liquid high-level radioactive waste. In 1980, Congress passed the



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