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DOE Under Secretary for Science Dabbar visits WVDP

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WEST VALLEY – To see the progress of decommissioning work at the West Valley Demonstration Project, Department of Energy Under Secretary for Science Paul M. Dabbar made a visit to the site. Dabbar was given a tour of the WVDP on Sept. 23 by Site Director Brian Bower, Deputy Director Craig Rieman and others involved at the site, with Dabbar leaving impressed with everything going on.



Paul Dabbar (center) talks with Deputy Director Craig Rieman (left) and Site Director Brian Bower (right) during his visit to the West Valley Demonstration Project.

The Environmental Management Cleanup Program, which is under Dabbar's area in the DOE, was charged with cleaning up 107 sites across the country, with 91 of those sites currently completely cleaned up and 45 having portions turned over to the local community. Dabbar said WVDP is "one of the most important projects" and is excited to see the progress going on in West Valley.

"We have been very focused at the remaining ones including West Valley," Dabbar said. "There are a number of complexities associated with this particular site, but what's been truly exciting about the program and here in particular is that there has been a lot of near-term progress that has been made."

Dabbar commented on the demolition of the vitrification facility in West Valley, which solidified radioactive high-level waste at the site. With other sites including Savannah River, S.C. or Hanford Wash. either having vitrification facilities or having one built in the future, Dabbar said the work at West Valley of designing, building, running, processing and demolishing its vitrification facility can help other sites down the road.

"That is a real success for the American people, the taxpayer and the local community," Dabbar said. "Whenever we do a cleanup operation at any site, especially ones where there is similar technology, we learn a lot associated with that. [WVDP] was the first vitrification plant, this was the first vitrification plant torn down ... and there is a lot of specific engineering issues of the melters and the other components that was learned here that will be directly applicable to that cleanup."

One of the next big projects to happen at the West Valley Demonstration Project is the demolition of the main process building. Dabbar said there is the plans for the demolition are not fully laid out and plans are still being worked out with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Dabbar added that the work done on WVDP's vitrification facility will help when it becomes time for demolition of the main process building.

Dabbar assured West Valley residents that work at the WVDP has been making significant progress and crews are doing a great job during the decommissioning. With work including the demolition of vitrification facility and getting waste shipped off site, Dabbar commended everyone at WVDP for their work as they continue making improvements.

"I can say that as compared to where it was not that long ago, there is significantly less waste," Dabbar said. "I can't say enough positive about the workforce here, about the leadership team here and the people who work here everyday. It's not just about the buildings coming down, it's about they came down and put into containers and vast majority of it is out of state. I think that is really positive here."