

cattaraugus county

West Valley cleanup work progressing, official says

By Chris Chapman

CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT

LITTLE VALLEY – Cleanup and remediation are well under way at the West Valley Demonstration Project, an official of the company in charge of the operation told Cattaraugus County legislators this week. Updated: May 24, 2013, 08:26 PM Published: May 24, 2013, 08:26 PM

CH2M Hill B&W West Valley, a project management firm, took over the decommissioning and deconstruction process of the nuclear waste processing facility in 2011. The company's scope of work is fourfold, said Daniel Coyne, president and general manager.

First, workers are looking to get the high-level waste that still remains in the main plant out of the building and into a storage facility. Ten-foot-tall cans of the waste, fuel rods encased in glass – vitrified, as the industry calls it – are on three-foot-thick concrete slabs. The cans holding the waste are encased in thick concrete casks, and other safety measures are in place to protect the environment, Coyne said.

More than 200 of these concrete vaults sit on the site waiting for a place to go. There are no depositories established to receive the waste.

The second goal is to remove the legacy waste. That is the low-level waste that had been left on the site. Some of that has been shipped to facilities for storage in Nevada and Utah, Coyne said.

Third is the complete tear-down of the processing and vitrification facility on the site. Last is bringing down the remaining structures.

Work on dismantling what can come down is moving forward, Coyne told legislators.

“We have already shipped 48,000 cubic feet from the site,” he said, referring to materials when his firm began work at the site. “Another 80,000 cubic feet of newly generated material has shipped as well. We have also already torn down 40,000 square feet of building footprint.”

The last phase of the project, final decommissioning, is not expected to take place until 2020 at the earliest, Coyne said.

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