

Waste Management Mission

Low-Level The mission of the Waste Management Program at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory is to provide safe, compliant and cost-effective management services for newly generated and existing (legacy) waste streams and spent nuclear fuel. Safe operations and compliance with federal, state and local regulations are the highest priorities. So, too, are meeting the commitments made in the Settlement Agreement and the INEEL Site Treatment Plan, both approved in 1995. The Settlement Agreement among the Department of Energy, the state of Idaho and the U.S. Navy governs the treatment, transfer, storage and ultimate disposal of spent nuclear fuel, high-level waste and transuranic waste. The INEEL Site Treatment Plan primarily addresses managing mixed low-level wastes.

Treating, storing and disposing of the cold-war legacy of wastes, spent nuclear fuel and nuclear materials is the INEEL's immediate challenge. The waste inventory consists of approximately

- 559 cubic meters of spent nuclear fuel
- 10,000 cubic meters of high-level and sodium-bearing wastes
- 9,400 cubic meters of low-level waste
- 1,613 cubic meters of mixed low-level waste
- 64,900 cubic meters of transuranic waste
- 420,000 cubic meters of environmental remediation waste.

This Progress Report discusses the accomplishments, goals and changes of spent nuclear fuel and other waste streams. This Progress Report discusses the accomplishments, goals and challenges posed by treating,

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Mixed Low-

transuranic

Industrial/Commercial

Accelerated Cleanup

In 1996, DOE announced its intention to accelerate cleanup across the complex. DOE has two overarching goals. The first goal is treating and disposing of wastes as they are generated; the second is completing the treatment and disposal of most of the existing waste inventories and spent nuclear fuel by the end of 2006. Under the proposed accelerated schedule, the INEEL will:

- Place 100 percent of DOE-owned spent nuclear fuel (non-naval) in dry storage
- Eliminate 100 percent of the existing inventory of low-level and mixed low-level waste
- Ship 30 percent of the stored transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
- Calcine 100 percent of the liquid high-level waste
- Calcine 60 percent of the sodium-bearing waste.

These and other projects are described in the draft *Accelerating Cleanup: Paths to Closure* document.

Spent Nuclear Fuel (559 m³) Low-Level Waste (9,400 m³) Mixed Low-Level Waste (1,613 m³) Transuranic Waste (64,900 m³) 335 Feet Deep

High-Level

Hazardous



The current INEEL waste and spent nuclear fuel inventory volume is roughly one football field, 335 feet deep.

Storage, Treatment and Disposal at the INEEL

Storage, treatment and disposal activities are primarily concentrated at key facilities across the INEEL. The map to the right shows facility locations. Spent nuclear fuel is represented on the map but is not considered a waste product.

Storage <

The Radioactive Waste Management Complex is the main storage area for transuranic waste. Stored transuranic wastes will be

sent to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico, for final disposal. Mixed low-level waste is stored at permitted facilities across the INEEL. Low-level waste is stored primarily at the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility and the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (formerly the Idaho Chemical Processing Plant).

The Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center is the primary management and storage location for liquid and solid high-level wastes and spent nuclear fuel. Spent nuclear fuel and vitrified high-level waste will be sent out of the state to a geologic repository or monitored retrievable storage location.

Facilities that store smaller quantities are also shown on the map.

Treatment

Treatment of liquid low-level and high-level waste streams takes place at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center. Liquid high-level waste was turned into solid calcine at the New Waste Calcining Facility located at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center. Sodium-bearing waste is currently being calcined.







Another important treatment facility is the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility, located within the Power Burst Facility area. It is the only site in the DOE complex that currently accepts off-site mixed low-level waste for treatment.

In the future, transuranic wastes may be treated at the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project Facility pending a record of decision on the upcoming environmental impact statement. The proposed location of the facility is the Radioactive Waste Management Complex.

Disposal

Waste is disposed of at only two locations at the INEEL. Non-hazardous industrial/commercial waste is disposed of at the Central Facilities Area landfills and low-level radioactive waste at the Subsurface Disposal Area at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex.

Combustible mixed low-level wastes are treated at the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility. The process results in very small quantities of ash. This residue is characterized and stabilized as required before disposal at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex or transport to commercial disposal facilities.





Industrial/Commercial Waste

Industrial/commercial waste is solid waste (such as paper, wood, asbestos and construction/demolition debris) generated by manufacturing or industrial processes. This waste does not contain radiological or hazardous material. The landfill complex annually receives between 46,000 and 85,000 cubic meters of uncompacted solid waste for disposal or recycling.

The strategy for managing industrial waste is to continue cost-effective landfill operations while pursuing energy-recovery activities. Industrial waste potentially eligible for energy recovery is transported to the Cold Waste Handling Facility for segregation. Eligible materials, such as scrap lumber that has been run through a wood chipper, are processed into pellets. The pellets are mixed with coal and used to fuel boilers at the Coal-Fired Steam Generation Facility at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center. To date, the "cuber" has processed 33.7 metric tons of cold waste from the INEEL. Seventy-six percent of the waste previously destined for the landfill could be used for pellets. This results in a potential savings of \$1.1 million in annual operating costs for the Coal Fired Steam Generating Plant.

Pollution prevention and waste minimization goals include:

- Reducing by 33 percent the generation of sanitary waste from a baseline of 4,551 metric tons
 - Recycling 33 percent of sanitary waste
 - Increasing procurement of EPA-designated recycled products to 100 percent when possible
 - Increasing the amount of waste processed into pellets.





Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste generated at the INEEL primarily consists of process wastes, solvents, lead-contaminated debris and laboratory packs of unused and out-of-date chemicals. Hazardous wastes do not contain radiological material. Approximately 100 cubic meters of hazardous waste is generated annually.

The INEEL minimizes long-term storage by shipping the hazardous waste it generates to commercial off-site permitted facilities. Avoidance of hazardous waste generation is emphasized through an effective waste elimination and pollution prevention program. Materials such as batteries, circuit boards and precious metals are recycled.

Goals for waste minimization include:

- Reducing by 50 percent the generation of hazardous waste from a baseline of 159,840 pounds
- Continuing treatment and disposal of INEEL hazardous wastes at off-site facilities
- Reducing by 50 percent treatment and disposal of toxic chemicals from a baseline of 363,921 pounds.



• Shipped 200,000 pounds of hazardous waste for off-site disposal.

Chalenges

- Eliminate the existing inventory of low-level waste by 1999.
- Funding may not be available to support plans for the elimination of the backlog of low-level waste.

Low-Level Waste

Low-level waste is unique in that it is defined as what it is not rather than what it is. Low-level radioactive waste is not high-level waste, transuranic waste, spent nuclear fuel or by-product material. Most low-level waste at the INEEL can be handled by direct contact, but some requires handling by remotely operated equipment.

All low-level waste is disposed of in the Active Pit in the Radioactive Waste Management Complex Subsurface Disposal Area. Some contact-handled low-level waste is incinerated, sized or compacted at the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility before disposal. Contact-handled waste that cannot be processed is sent directly to the contact-handled low-level waste section of the Active Pit. Remote-handled low-level waste is disposed of in concrete vaults in the remote-handled portion of the Active Pit.

Plans call for closure of the contact-handled low-level waste section of the Active Pit in 2006. The final cover for the pit must be able to withstand intrusion and deter water infiltration. Two cover designs are being evaluated at the Engineered Barrier Test Facility in preparation for the closure: a bio-

> capillary design and a thick soil cover. These evaluations will help determine the final closure cover design for the Active Pit.

> > A continued downward trend in low-level waste generation will result in the generation of about 2,200 cubic meters of low-level waste at the INEEL each year. The INEEL is projected to manage about 73,000 cubic meters of newly generated low-level waste in the next 35 years.

The INEEL began using soft-sided containers this past winter for disposal of large volumes of contaminated soil and debris at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex. These containers yield a 5-to-1 cost savings compared to rigid containers. By using the soft-sided containers, space within the disposal pit is maximized.



Low-Level Low-Leve Tímel

Dec. 31, 1999–Reduce the of low-level waste awaiting in the contact-handled low-level waste section of the Active Pathan 2,000 cubic meters

Dec. 31, 1999–Reduce by 50 percent the generation mixed low-level waste

> **Dec. 31, 2001**–Comp additional remote-han disposal vaults

> > Sep. 2003–Comp mixed low-level wa

Sep. 2005–Begi contact-handled lo offsite

Dec. 31, 2006–Fill thandled waste section of Pit and turn it over for closed

Dec. 31, 2008–Fill the reachandled section of the Active and turn it over for closure

2007 through 2040–D contact-handled low-level offsite

2009 through 2040 remote-handled low-lee offsite



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Challenges

- Legal issues have complicated the availability of off-site disposal facilities.
- Declining budgets make continued treatment and disposal difficult.

Mixed Low-Level Waste

Mixed low-level waste contains both hazardous and low-level radioactive components. Most INEEL-generated mixed low-level waste resulted from defense nuclear processes, facility dismantlement activities and research.

The INEEL has been identified and proven itself as a regional treatment center for DOE mixed low-level wastes. The INEEL's Waste Experimental Reduction Facility is currently the only DOE incinerator that can treat off-site mixed lowlevel waste. The state of Idaho has approved this facility to treat more than 840 cubic meters of mixed low-level waste stored throughout the DOE complex and an estimated 1,600 cubic meters to be generated in the next five years. This represents a strategic alliance

with 29 other DOE sites to reduce the inventory of stored mixed lowlevel waste and prepare it for disposal.





Mixed low-level waste streams that cannot be treated at the Idaho facility may be shipped to another regional center for treatment when these facilities receive approval for treating off-site wastes. Currently, the other

facilities are at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee and at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina.

In 1997, the INEEL disposed of more than 512,000 pounds of lead. Some of this lead was recycled to make shielded overpacks for uranium-233 storage at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex. The remaining lead was either disposed of at Envirocare of Utah or recycled by Gould Battery.

Under provisions proposed by the *INEEL Site Treatment Plan*, wastes received from offsite must be treated within six months of receipt and all treatment residues must be sent out of Idaho within six months of treatment. The INEEL has received shipments of mixed low-level waste for incineration from a number of other sites. The Waste Experimental Reduction Facility is successfully processing this waste while meeting all established time frames.

Mixed Low-Level Waste

- Incinerated more than 43,000 pounds of mixed low-level waste at the Waste Experimental Reduction Facility.
- Treated 151.5 cubic meters of mixed low-level waste generated at the INEEL.
- Shipped 512,000 pounds of clean lead and batteries to support the INEEL's lead recycling efforts.
- Completed 14 *INEEL Site Treatment Plan* milestones on or ahead of schedule.



Transı Waste T

1998–Anticipated opening of the Was Isolation Pilot Plant

Jun. 1998–Advance Mixed Waste Treatme Project Draft Environmental Impo Statement expected

> **Dec. 1998**–Advan Waste Treatment Record of Decisio

> > Apr. 30, 1999 shipment of tra waste to the V Pilot Plant

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Dec. 31, 2002



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Chalenges

- Litigation and political difficulties will probably delay the opening of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (scheduled for mid-1998).
- The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant has yet to be granted its Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Part B Permit by the state of New Mexico.
- The INEEL must receive DOE-Carlsbad Area Office and EPA approval of its program to certify waste for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.
- The permitting requirements for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant may change, delaying certification of waste for disposal.

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• Funding may not be available to support plans.

Transuraníc Waste

Most transuranic waste stored at the INEEL resulted from nuclear weapons production at the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado. The primary radioactive contaminants in this type of waste are plutonium and americium. Because most of the INEEL's inventory of transuranic waste also contains other hazardous substances, it is managed as mixed waste.

The INEEL stores about 60 percent of the volume of DOE's current inventory of transuranic waste. Most of the waste is stored at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex. A very small amount is also located at Argonne National Laboratory–West.



The total volume amounts to roughly 64,900 cubic meters of transuranic waste–about 130,000 55-gallon drums and 11,000 boxes. Approximately

57,500 cubic meters of transuranic waste buried before 1970 is not included in this inventory. Buried waste is located in the Subsurface Disposal Area at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex.

As required by the Settlement Agreement, the INEEL must begin shipping untreated transuranic waste to a permanent geologic repository by April 30, 1999. The INEEL has been characterizing this waste since September 1997. Waste characterization is performed at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex, at Argonne National Laboratory–West and at laboratories at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center. The drums are examined and analyzed to determine the condition of the container, the amounts and types of radioactive material, the amounts of Resource Conservation and Recovery Act hazardous constituents (such as volatile organic compounds) and the presence or absence of prohibited materials (such as liquids or aerosol cans).



Transu Waste T (contír

shipments of 3,100 meters–15,000 dru equivalent–of trans waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. Complete construction Advanced Mixed Wa Treatment Facility

> Mar. 31, 2003–F treatment of wast Advanced Mixed Treatment Faci

> > 2006–Meet r 19,500 cubic transuranic out of state

Dec. 31, 201 Settlement Ag milestone for 6 meters (100 pero stored transurani shipped out of state

Dec. 31, 2018–Fina for all stored transura waste to be out of Ida



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5–Meet reement 5,000 cubic cent) of c waste e l date

inic iho Before this waste can be shipped off-site for permanent disposal, each drum must be certified as meeting established requirements for safe transportation and disposal. Permanent disposal is planned for DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

The remaining transuranic waste stored at the INEEL does not meet the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant waste acceptance criteria. Before it is shipped to the national repository, the waste may be treated and repackaged at the new Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility. An environmental impact statement is being performed on the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project. The privatized Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility would be located at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex, beginning operations by early 2003.

Transuranic Waste

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- Relocated transuranic wastes to new storage buildings at the Radioactive Waste Management Complex. The new buildings provide improved inspection and access. Relocation was completed five months ahead of schedule and approximately \$1 million under budget.
- Initiated characterization of transuranic waste to prepare the waste for certification and shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. A backlog of characterized waste will be ready by May 1998. The INEEL expects to achieve full production capability for certification by the fourth quarter of 1998. More than 1,500 drums of transuranic waste were characterized by March 31, 1998.
- Completed the certification authorization audit by the DOE-Carlsbad Area Office. The certification authorization is required before waste can be shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

Challenges

- Funding may not be available to support plans.
- · Developing and implementing new technology for waste treatment.
- Ability to permit existing waste treatment processes, such as calcination.

High-Level Waste

High-level waste is highly radioactive waste material (solid and liquid) that resulted from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. The INEEL's large inventory of highlevel waste is the result of 40 years of reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. Reprocessing was phased out in 1992. Since 1963, much of the liquid waste has been calcined (evaporated and oxidized) to convert it to a more stable, solid form. The calcine is stored in stainless steel bins within a concrete vault. Calcining achieves a volume reduction of 4-to-1 or greater.

Wastes managed at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center include:

- High-level liquid waste
- Sodium-bearing liquid waste
- High-level calcined solid waste
- Debris and discarded high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.

The basic management strategy is to convert the liquid high-level and sodium-bearing waste to a stable solid form that can be more safely stored. This will be followed by further treatment before final disposal.

In February 1998, the INEEL finished calcining 270,000 gallons of sodium-bearing liquid high-level waste ahead of schedule. Calcining the remaining 1.4 million gallons of sodium-bearing liquid waste began more than three years ahead of schedule.

Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center

The name of the Idaho Chemical Processing Plant was recently changed to the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center. Details about this change will be included in the next INEEL Reporter.



High Waste

Feb. 1999– Dro Level Waste and Disposition Envir Impact Statement

2000–Begin negotivity with the state of Ida plan for the treatment calcined high-level

Mar. 2009–Ceas waste tanks conta pillar and panel

> **Dec. 2012**–Co calcining 1.4 r of liquid rad

> > Dec. 2035 level waste to be moved



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–Treat all highso that it is ready l out of Idaho After all the liquid high-level and sodium-bearing waste is calcined, there will be approximately 6,000 cubic meters of solid calcine in seven storage facilities. Current plans are for the calcine to be processed further, possibly into the form of a glass or ceramic, to make it ready for permanent disposal. DOE issued a Notice of Intent in September 1997 to complete an environmental impact statement that would examine the potential impacts of various alternatives for treating and disposing of this stored waste (see Public Involvement Opportunities on p. 18 for details). This will guide a final decision on treatment of the calcined waste, remaining liquid wastes and tank farm closure. The final environmental impact statement is expected to be issued in September 1999.





- Started operation of the high-level liquid waste evaporator five months ahead of schedule. Reduced the tank farm liquid waste volume more than 330,000 gallons by February 10, 1997, more than ten months ahead of schedule.
- Completed calcining high-level liquid radioactive waste on February 20, 1998, more than four months ahead of schedule.
- Completed public scoping for the *INEEL High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Environmental Impact Statement.*
- Began calcining remaining 1.4 million gallons of liquid radioactive waste three years ahead of schedule.

Chalenges

- Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing and subcontract issues may cause a delay in construction of a dry storage facility.
- Available knowledge of spent nuclear fuel performance in the repository and development of acceptance criteria is affecting interim management decisions.
- Funding may not be available to support plans.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Spent nuclear fuel is material that has been withdrawn from a nuclear reactor following irradiation. On-site storage and disposition of spent nuclear fuel has primarily been at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center, but some spent nuclear fuel storage was provided at other INEEL locations in support of reactor development and spent nuclear fuel testing.

About 559 cubic meters of DOE fuel (about 52 percent of the total DOE-owned inventory by volume) is stored at the INEEL in both wet and dry storage. DOE-owned spent nuclear fuel stored at numerous

INEEL facilities is being consolidated into dry storage at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center and Test Area North. Dry storage is the preferred storage medium because it reduces corrosion concerns, meets or exceeds all safety requirements and is less expensive to monitor. In addition, spent nuclear fuel must be in dry storage to be ready for shipment.

As DOE's lead laboratory, the INEEL is managing and developing new technologies and strategies for the disposition

of all DOE-owned and naval spent nuclear fuel. The strategy for spent nuclear fuel management at the INEEL is to prepare it for transport out of Idaho to a permanent geologic repository or interim storage facility.



Spent Nu Fuel Tím

Sep. 1998–Complete Nuc Regulatory Commission lice transfer of Fort St. Vrain Inc Spent Fuel Storage Installatio DOE

Mar. 31, 1999–Begin moving into Three Mile Island dry stora facility

Dec. 31, 2000–Remove all nuclear fuel from underwate basins in CPP-603

> **Sep. 2000**–Provide add nuclear fuel information repository program to in the repository licer

> > **Jul. 01, 2003**–Beg nuclear fuel in new of facilities

Sep. 30, 2006–Com movement of all DOE-o naval) spent nuclear fuel storage

Sep. 30, 2016–Initiate INE spent fuel shipments to the na repository

Dec. 31, 2023–Move all spen fuel out of wet storage

Jan. 1, 2035–Complete ship spent nuclear fuel

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The Settlement Agreement specifies both the amount and types of spent fuel that can be shipped to the INEEL along with the amounts and types that will be

leaving Idaho for other DOE facilities. If either DOE or the Navy fails to meet any milestone outlined in the Settlement Agreement, the state of Idaho can ask a federal judge to halt their respective spent nuclear fuel shipments to Idaho.

Interim spent nuclear fuel management includes packaging the inventory into containers that meet the repository acceptance criteria. These containers will be approved for shipment in licensed transportation casks. They will be stored until disposal facilities become available.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

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- Continued to consolidate spent nuclear fuel from across the site including moving spent fuel from the CPP-603 underwater basins.
- Initiated design and Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensing for the dry storage facility that will store Three Mile Island core debris.
- Developed and issued for industry comment a request for proposal for a privatized spent nuclear fuel dry packaging facility and the first complement of dry storage modules.
- Provided the DOE-owned spent nuclear fuel inventory information and No-Action Alternative input to the repository program for inclusion in the repository environmental impact statement.
 - Submitted the application for transfer of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission license for the Colorado storage facility that contains the Ft. St. Vrain spent nuclear fuel inventory. Operational readiness activities are underway.

Public Involvement Opportunities

The *Draft Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project Environmental Impact Statement* is due in June 1998. Public comments are welcome throughout the entire environmental impact statement process. When the draft is released, a public comment period will be held to solicit comments. DOE will make every effort to keep stakeholders informed as the environmental impact statement is being prepared.

To request additional information, contact Kathleen Whitaker at (208) 526-1062 or **whitakkb@inel.gov**.

The *Draft INEEL High-Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Environmental Impact Statement* is due in February 1999. In the interim, comments are welcome. When the draft environmental impact statement is released, a public comment period will be opened to receive input.

To request additional information on this project, contact Brad Bugger at (208) 526-0833 or **buggerbp@inel.gov**.

How to Get More Information

There are several ways to obtain information about INEEL waste management activities:



Target Mailing Lists

Mailing lists are maintained and continually updated so interested citizens and groups can automatically receive general or specific INEEL information. You can request to be added to mailing lists by calling the INEEL toll-free number.

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Toll-Free Phone Number

To request specific documents; request a speaker or briefing on a particular topic; inquire about public meetings or public comment periods; schedule a tour of INEEL; or request other information, call the INEEL toll-free number at 1 (800) 708-2680.





Videos/Instructional Materials

Videos and brochures are available on a variety of subjects, including the Snake River Plain Aquifer, waste management, and general INEEL history. To request the use of these items, call the INEEL toll-free number.



Internet

The INEEL Home Page address is **http://www.inel.gov**. Specific INEEL environmental information is available at **http://www.inel.gov/environment/enviro.html**.



INEEL Idaho Falls Office

The INEEL Community Relations Office is located in Idaho Falls and can provide information and briefings on waste management topics. Call Stacey Francis at (208) 526-0075 or use the INEEL toll-free number for more information.



INEEL Boise Regional Office

The INEEL Regional Office in Boise provides information and other resources for those living in the western portion of the state. The office is located at 805 West Idaho Street, Suite 301, Boise, Idaho 83703, or call (208) 334-9572.

Overview

This report presents an overview of the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory's Waste Management Program for 1997. (This report was formerly called the *Citizens' Guide*.) It also identifies challenges faced by the Program as the INEEL continues safe and effective management of the Department of Energy's waste. Progress on upcoming activities will be highlighted throughout the year in the *INEEL Reporter*.

The planning assumptions presented in this document are taken from the INEEL's *Accelerated Cleanup: Paths to Closure* document.

For more information on the INEEL's Waste Management Program, contact Stacey Francis at (208) 526-0075 or **syf@inel.gov**.



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