

## Safety First: Hanford Contractor Deploys New Tank-drilling Technology

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*A mock-up facility helped a Hanford Site contractor team train and refine a new technology before using it on an actual waste-storage tank on the site.*

**RICHLAND, Wash.** — A contractor is using an innovative system at the [Hanford Site](#) to cut into a waste-filled underground tank, showcasing new technology that improves efficiency and reduces worker and environmental risks.

Field crews with [tank farms](#) contractor Washington River Protection Solutions spent five months building and testing the technology on tank dome replicas before performing the work on an actual tank in October 2023. Workers used a large drill on

the tank's thick concrete top to create a new access hole. They then installed a pipe to accommodate new equipment for future waste retrieval operations.

The technology allowed workers to access the dome without removing the soil covering the top of the tank by hand. It also reduced safety risks associated with manual soil excavation, like falling or confined space entry.

“The Department of Energy **Office of Environmental Management** is committed to Hanford's risk-reduction mission, which includes finding safer alternatives to traditional waste removal activities,” said Delmar Noyes, **Hanford** assistant manager for Tank Waste Operations. “This system was developed keeping worker safety in mind, and refined following an extensive mock-up process with worker input.”



*Voluntary Protection Programs Participants' Association board member Andy Foster, far left, and executive director Chris Williams, far right, recently presented a U.S. Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program Innovation Award to Hanford Site contractor Washington River Protection Solutions. Accepting the award are Washington River Protection Solutions Safety Specialist Mandy Reeves, middle left, and Nuclear Chemical Operator Bruce Watkins, middle right.*

This safety-focused work recently helped Washington River Protection Solutions receive its seventh U.S. Department of Energy Voluntary Protection Program **Innovation Award**. This award is for new technology that significantly reduces the potential for worker injury.

“The award reflects the teamwork that went into improving existing technology and worker safety,” said Peggy Hamilton, the contractor's retrievals manager. “This

technology will enable future equipment installation to be handled in a similar manner, further reducing employee exposure and keeping our workers safe.”

Watch workers drill a hole into the dome of an underground waste-storage tank to install waste-retrieval equipment [here](#).