

## Newspaper Article

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Article written by the *Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee*

### **Work Picks up at CY as Bechtel Takes Over**

The word for the week - and the month and the rest of the year and into the new year - at the Connecticut Yankee nuclear power site in Haddam neck is "Busy."

In early fall, the management of the former power plant began the transition of duties and responsibilities over to Bechtel Power Corp., the decommissioning contractor selected in spring. Within the last several weeks, much of transition has taken place and the former plant site is as warm with hundreds of craftspeople - laborers, electrical workers, asbestos removers, welders and riggers among them. Bechtel has about 465 people under its purview, Connecticut Yankee another 150 on its portion of the site.

More important, the work load has shifted from planning to actual demolition and removal of buildings and equipment. In early October, for instance, Bechtel worked with the owners of a Midwest utility and arranged for the transfer by barge of a 300-ton transformer. In October, work crews began removal of four huge steam generators from the containment building. Because portions of the generators had been slightly contaminated by use during electrical power generation, the work proceeded very slowly and carefully, under strict monitoring.

"Removing the generators, however, removes much of the radioactivity and now other work in the containment building can be done more rapidly," said Dick MilleBechtel's project manager.

When the steam generators were cut into two pieces - a steam dome of about 75 tons, a lower portion of about 155 tons - the domes were removed from the containment building and sealed for shipment to a disposal facility in Tennessee. The first of them was moved from CY to the rail siding in Portland for shipment during November. Moving them from the CY site required special trucks and arrangement with police and traffic control officials. Although transport from the CY site to the Portland rail siding took four hours, traffic disruption in all cases was minimal, and the last dome was shipped to the rail siding in mid-November. Two of the domes have already been shipped to a recycling facility in Tennessee; the other two (as of December 1) were on rail cars awaiting pickup.

The transformer and the steam domes are not the only material leaving the CY site. With the demolition of four buildings on site, truckloads of debris have also been bundled, sealed, and shipped to a disposal facility.

The first steam generator was removed from containment mid-November, with all four scheduled for removal by early December. The generators will be stored on-site at CY until arrangement can be made to move them by barge to a disposal site in Barnwell, SC. Their removal will permit Bechtel crews working under intense monitoring to begin work in the reactor pressure vessel itself - work that will have to be done using cameras and robotics.

While portions of the CY plant are being taken apart and removed, contractors have built a new control facility for the spent fuel pool under the direction of Connecticut Yankee staff. Because there is no national depository for spent nuclear fuel, the fuel rods that once powered the CY plant will stay on-site, under the care of CY management. The new control room is now ready and, with isolation of the fuel pool and control room, work can intensify on complete clean-up of the CY site.

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### **CY Site Could be Used for Power Plant Again**

What's the best use for a former power plant site? Possibly another power plant.

More than two years ago, as Haddam faced the loss of tax revenue from the CY plant, then First Selectman Keith Ainsworth created the Repowering Advisory Committee to consider the idea of a re-using a portion of the CY site for another power plant.

"It made sense," Ainsworth said. "For one thing we wanted community residents to take an active role in planning what the site would become, rather than simply reacting to someone else's decision." He also felt, even before forming the committee, that a power plant made sense - that some of the infrastructure created for CY could be re-used, that a power company would be more comfortable than most firms with occupying a site that still held the nuclear fuel rods from the old plant. Even so, Ainsworth said that the committee didn't have a real agenda. "It was educational at first," he said. "We met with members of the Siting Council, with representatives from CY and from Bechtel to see what the possibilities were." As they considered various possibilities, a gas turbine looked like the best idea and in March this year the Haddam zoning commission approved the idea of a gas-fired turbine on a portion of the CY site.

At the same time members of CY were working with Bechtel Power Corp. on the same possibility. In fact as part of its decommissioning contract, CY had Bechtel, the decommissioning operator, put together a study for another power plant on the CY site.

"The study was very well done," said Russ Mellor, CY's vice president. It not only looked at what site requirements would be for a plant, but considered what existing facilities - piping, the discharge canal, transmission lines - might be re-used. In late summer, CY, which has and will have responsibility for the site, considered a proposal for a plant from an outside contractor. The proposal was turned down, Mellor said, in part because the proposal didn't commit the outside firm to actually begin construction or to operate the plant.

"We were looking for someone who would actually commit to the project and to the site," Mellor said, "and that didn't happen."

Right now, interest in the site is not high, although the study done by Bechtel would provide a developer with the means to get started, Mellor thinks. Haddam officials, including the present First Selectman Tony Bondi, are hopeful that sooner or later, the CY site will be taken under serious consideration by a firm that wants to build and operate a gas-fired power plant.

"It could have a positive impact on the town," Bondi said, referring to a plant's effect on the tax base, "but there are a lot of permits and logistics to deal with. We're holding regular meetings with CY on this and other issues, but I don't see much happening for a few years."

"There are a lot of projects out there," Mellor said, "and a lot of power demands. A few years from now, when the site is cleaner, there may be more interest."

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### **CDAC's Mission**

At a special retreat meeting of the Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee in November, CDAC refined its mission and purpose. Made up of members of local communities, CDAC exists to provide public forums for issues regarding the decommissioning of the Connecticut Yankee atomic power plant and to address issues about the decommissioning at CY's Haddam Neck site.

Among the issues that CDAC is concerned with are these:

- Public outreach and committee education
- Transport of radioactive waste
- Management of spent fuel
- The License Termination Plan and its implementation
- Future use of the Haddam Neck site
- Radiological and industrial safety
- Remediation of the Haddam Neck site
- Local impact of CY decommissioning
- Ongoing regulatory involvements

Members of the public interested in these or other issues are invited to call members of CDAC or to attend CDAC meetings. The next CDAC meetings are scheduled for January 18, February 15 and March 21.

Please call 267-3526 for location and meeting times.

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### **John Wray, NRC**

Although Connecticut Yankee no longer produces electricity, the site is still under the supervision of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"Anyone who uses radioactive material comes under the NRC," said John Wray, the NRC inspector assigned to the CY site. "As long as nuclear material stays on-site, we'll be involved." Although based at the NRC's regional office in Pennsylvania, Wray has an office at CY and, as the decommissioning work has intensified, including removal of the steam generators and other work in the containment building - the heart of the old nuclear power plant - he is on-site much of the time. It is a different role than the NRC had when the plant was active.

"With an operating plant, we were more concerned with reactor safety, and an NRC inspector was on-site all the time. We had to make sure procedures were done correctly and we looked very closely at training and processes." With the plant off-line, Wray said, the risk of a catastrophic accident has diminished as the nuclear fuel has been moved to a spent fuel pool, and the NRC released CY from many off-site restrictions. Yet, as the plant is dismantled, the risk of radioactive exposure increases for those closest to the work.

"When we begin to dismantle we open systems that were once closed," he said, "and begin working with equipment that may be contaminated. "We're charged with protecting the health and safety of the public," Wray said. "That includes people working on the plant. If we can minimize their exposure, then exposure to the public is also minimal." Wray has spent a lot of time recently in the containment building where workers are disassembling the steam generators.

"We've looked at plans," Wray said, "everything from major tasks to the sub-tasks within them. We have a sense of dose estimates." Workers are often dressed in protective clothing and working in a de-pressurized atmosphere, so that any air-borne particles are not released to the atmosphere, and Wray is closely involved, checking procedures and monitoring. "Part of my job consists of asking questions - 'What are you doing and why?'" Eventually, he said, the entire containment building - the huge round-topped building that is CY's most visible feature - will be dismantled and removed. "The best way to do that, he said, "is to move all the radioactive material from within it - the steam generators and cooling pipes and pumping. Removal of the steam generators is a significant evolution, but also a preparation for other work to come."

With about 27 years of nuclear experience - designing plants, inspecting them, working for a utility as a radiation protection manager - Wray thinks he has a good grasp of the issues involved and of the people who work with them.

"I now what the workers are going through and thinking," he said. "At the same time, I'm working for the public. I know their issues and I think of myself as their on-site representative."