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Article written by the Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee

Connecticut Yankee Turns Much Work Over, Retains Responsibility

After months of preparation, work at the Connecticut Yankee nuclear power plant site in Haddam Neck is moving to a critical new phase - the actual deconstruction, or decommissioning of the huge plant on the east bank of the Connecticut River.

Earlier this year, management of the Connecticut Yankee Atomic Power Company selected the Bechtel Power Corp. of Frederick, MD as the decommissioning contractor. Under the terms of the contract, Bechtel personnel and contractors hired by Bechtel will disassemble the huge power plant.

Portions of that work have already begun, and the 30-acre plant site is swarming with people either planning work, engaged in work or making preparations for work yet to come. Right now, Connecticut Yankee has about 110 people on-site, with about 200 contract personnel working under their supervision. Bechtel has about 80 management personnel; another 180 craft people and about 115 contract people engaged. As work progresses, the numbers under Bechtel's purview will increase; the numbers under CY will diminish.

"The transition is going well," said Russ Mellor, CY vice president. "A bit slower than we'd planned, but we'd rather go slow and be absolutely safe."

Some work is quite visible. Workers have cleared trees and brush near a canal where barges will dock to remove equipment that can't be trucked from the site. This month, two modular buildings at the rear of the plant were demolished and cut up. The debris - scrap wood and wallboard to steel girders - has been placed into metal shipping crates for shipment to a disposal facility.

There are two major projects at this time. In one, a giant transformer is being prepared for shipment to a new owner - a Midwest utility. The transformer, the size of a small house, weighs about 350 tons; stripped of its auxiliary equipment, it weighs about 300 and will require special trailers and special rigging equipment to move. It will be carried about 200 yards from its present site to the barge slip for shipment, entirely by water, to its new owner in Nebraska. Preparing for the move requires that workers lay a concrete pad from the present paved lot to the barge slip.

That pad will later be used when four steam generators are shipped for disposal. The four generators, about 46 feet long and about 237 tons were a critical component of the former plant, using the heat from the nuclear reactor to generate steam that spun the turbines that produced electricity. Removing them now will reduce worker exposure over the next three years as other portions of the plant are dismantled.

Although initial plans called for the generators to be removed and shipped by barge to the federally supervised nuclear disposal site in Savannah River, South Carolina, low water levels in the Savannah River do not permit shipment now. Bechtel recommends removing the generators within a month and storing them - covered and protected - on-site until spring. While still under consideration, Mellor anticipates no problem with the on-site storage.

"The generators will be well-shielded," he said.

Work behind the scenes is just as intense as CY prepares to turn over most of the site - 21 separate systems - to Bechtel. This involves the head of each CY department meeting with his/her counterpart and agreeing on everything from equipment to procedures. In some cases - Community Relations, for instance - the transfer involves just a few responsibilities. In areas like Maintenance and Engineering, it may involve scores of people and procedures from plumbing maintenance to snowplowing; from critical software to extensive documentation, training and certification of key personnel.

While Bechtel is ramping up, CY staff are completing work on the spent fuel pool - long-term storage of the used nuclear fuel. A new control room for the pool is being built and systems are being turned over now. CY will supervise the fuel pool and the site itself until the Department of Energy takes responsibility for the pool and the site is released for other uses.

"We're the licensee," Mellor said. "Responsibility for the site has always been ours - and always will be."

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Joyce Rossitter

Concerned about the long run

Joyce Rossitter of Middletown, just named as secretary to the Citizens Decommissioning Advisory Committee, became a member of CDAC in part because of earlier work with the League of Women Voters of Greater Middletown, in part because she tends to get involved in community issues

"In 1995, we did a year-long study on the dilemma of storing high-level nuclear waste, specifically spent fuel from nuclear power plants," she said. With a grant from the U.S. League of Women Voters Education Fund and the Department of Energy, the local chapter hired speakers, conducted hearings and held a symposium at Wesleyan University. She credits the late Ann Hibino of Portland, as the motivating force.

"She chaired the committee, got the grant and was the organizer," Rossitter said. "Our focus in particular was Connecticut Yankee," she said - the Greater Middletown chapter of the League included Easthampton, Portland, Haddam and Moodus - areas close to the plant. "It was basically a questioning process - what the problem of nuclear waste was and what were potential solutions."

What they found, she said, was there seemed to be no real solutions, either at CY or nationwide. Although the federal government had promised years ago to find and develop a disposal site for spent nuclear fuel, none yet exists, even though a number of nuclear power plants have closed or will be closed.

"The government spent over \$4 billion - that's billion," she repeated, "to develop a disposal facility at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, but it's not ready - and may never be." Until a site is developed, the fuel from each nuclear facility stays on-site. "Does that mean that the nuclear fuel from CY will stay in Haddam Neck forever? That's one solution."

The question is how the highly radioactive fuel rods are to be stored. CY stores it in a "spent fuel pool" and, as part of decommissioning will create a "spent fuel island" where the fuel will be maintained. In the future, CY may go to "dry cask" storage under which the rods would be placed into huge sealed casks.

Although the symposium and hearings created a level of awareness, Rossitter said, the closing of CY in December 1997 brought a new intensity to the discussion.

"It was a surprise because we didn't expect CY to close for another 12 years," she said. When CDAC was formed, she and Hibino were invited to join. When Hibino died in a auto accident, Rossitter stayed with the discussion and still feels a sense of urgency.

"I cut out articles, read newsletters," she said, "and it's not just a local or national issue." Local and state governments are in a quandary. Many Nevada residents say, "Not in my state." Although some Native American groups have offered land as potential disposal sites, governors are against transport of nuclear waste across their states. More citizens nationwide are concerned about transport of nuclear waste across the country. People have protested the transport of nuclear waste in Japan and Europe.

"But if Connecticut with its funding and skill levels can't figure what to do, what will other countries do?" she said. "It's a dilemma.

"I think everyone in Connecticut would like to get rid of the waste as soon as possible," she said, "but the question is how do we co-exist with it? It has to be stored for 250,000 years. How do we pay for the storage? Is wet or dry storage best? Our job on CDAC is to keep as much sunlight on this issue as possible and to keep area citizens informed."

Noah Fetherston

Ty Troutman

Working on Transition

As management of Connecticut Yankee Atomic Power Company turns the CY site over to the decommissioning operator, Bechtel Power Corp., two people at the center of the action are Noah Fetherston, CY's decommissioning project manager and Bechtel's transition manager, Ty Troutman.

Troutman breaks the transition into two distinct areas: Systems, Structures and Components, which would include everything from buildings to computers programs; and Programs and Procedures, which really includes 21 distinct department functions that are shifting from CY to Bechtel.

"It's a turnkey operation," Fetherston said. "That means turning over everything - roles and responsibilities - so that they can do what has to be done. Where CY once operated the system, now Bechtel will, and the transition is a rigid and

controlled process."

During transition the managers of each department - one from CY and one from Bechtel - begin the process with an alignment meeting, Troutman said. "At that time, they ask one another, 'What's being turned over and what be retained by CY.'" In the Maintenance department, for example, CY once did everything. After transition, CY will have responsibility for maintaining only the spent fuel pool - the storage of the nuclear fuel that once powered CY.

"Bechtel will take over everything outside that," Troutman said, "Everything from fixing lights to maintaining computer systems, from sweeping floors to plowing the snow."

Because of stringent safety considerations and strict regulations, the level of documentation can be quite high. The procedures themselves are often spelled out in great detail, and very often there are long lists of assets - tools, computers, manual, vehicles - being turned over as well.

"Everything that CY needed to operate the power plant, and that it doesn't need for operate the spent fuel island, gets turned over," Troutman said. Until the transition is complete, Troutman said, everyone is working under CY procedures. "All the procedures we develop must be approved by CY. They have to say that our procedures meet their standards."

In some cases, Fetherston said, CY will be turning over systems that are no longer needed. Various feed water systems have already been drained and taken out of service. As Bechtel take over responsibility for them, it will not be to operate them, but to dismantle them. Some systems, such as waste removal, will operate pretty much as before.

Even after transition is complete - the target date is end of October - Bechtel will do its work under the eye of a CY management team which will stay in an oversight capacity.

"It's one of the largest transitions I've ever worked on," Fetherston said. "It's also one of the smoothest - and that's because everyone involved wants it to work."

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