

Late last year the National Nuclear Security Administration awarded B&W and its partner, Covidien, \$9 million to aid in the development of its liquid phase nuclear technology, which uses small and accessible nuclear reactors to produce Mo-99, while GE-Hitachi received \$2.25 million for its plans to use its existing commercial reactors to produce the isotope. On June 10, NNSA requested permis-

sion from Congress to reprogram \$10 million for two more grants to private industry aimed at jump-starting domestic medical isotope production by September. The additional awards would further address the Obama Administration's goal of developing substantial domestic production capacity by 2013.

—Sarah Anderson

At the Weapons Labs/DOE Sites

AT LOS ALAMOS LAB SAYS PF-4 UPGRADE COSTS OVERSTATED

A Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board memo that questioned the potential cost of seismic upgrades at Los Alamos National Laboratory likely overstated the cost of the work by a substantial amount, according to a Los Alamos National Laboratory spokesman. The comment, contained in a June 4 weekly report from DNFSB staff, claimed that lab staff had identified 157 "high risk" gloveboxes that need seismic upgrades, twice as many as previously believed, and that the cost per glovebox had risen from \$80,000 to \$850,000 to perform the necessary upgrades (*NW&M Monitor*, Vol. 14 No. 27). Those numbers were, in both cases, bounding numbers in a range of possible costs, according to Los Alamos spokesman Kevin Roark. He said the lab believes "very few" of the 157 gloveboxes identified in the study will need the most expensive type of upgrade, but declined to say what the current estimates are for the work.

The gloveboxes in question are located in building PF-4 at the lab's Technical Area 55, which is the main plutonium work area where pit manufacturing and other heavy plutonium work is done. The DNFSB has identified PF-4, built in the 1970s, as a significant risk in a worst case earthquake scenario. Under that scenario, a roughly one-in-a-thousand year earthquake could cause fires within the glovebox lines while simultaneously breaching building containment, posing potentially catastrophic off-site radiation danger. The lab's current safety document calls for the highest risk gloveboxes to receive seismic reinforcement by 2011. The current funding profile, with the work to be done as part of the TA55 Reinvestment Project, calls for stretching out funding for the first 40 gloveboxes to 2014.

AT OAK RIDGE Y-12 DISMANTLEMENT RATE SLOWS SLIGHTLY IN FY2010

The National Nuclear Security Administration confirmed that the dismantlement numbers at the Y-12 National Security Complex were set to decline from Fiscal Year 2009 to FY2010, after touting a significant acceleration in that work over the past two to three years, but a spokesman attributed the "slight" decrease to the complexity of the plant's work involved with certain nuclear warhead components. "When taking into consideration the complexity of the specific components being processed in FY 2010, the Y-12 dismantlement effort has actually increased when compared to 2009," Y-12 federal spokesman Steven Wyatt said. "There will be fluctuations in numbers from year to year as we transition between dismantlement of different systems; some are more complex and difficult than others. Even though the number of units has decreased slightly in FY 2010, the dismantlement rate remains at historically high levels."

earlier this year indicated that the NNSA warhead dismantlement numbers are nowhere near historic highs achieved in the mid-1990s. In FY2009, the NNSA dismantled 356 warheads, down from a high of 1,393 in FY1995. The agency did not respond to a request for comment about the broad rate of dismantlement in FY2010, which includes work at the Pantex Plant.

Keeping a Steady Pace

In a teleconference with reporters last week, newly confirmed NNSA Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs Don Cook noted that the total number of warheads had dropped from 35,000 to the recently stated 5,113 and that there remains a "large number" of warheads to be dismantled. The workload at Pantex and Y-12 will stay busy until 2022, based on current assessment, and the important thing is to keep that dismantlement work ongoing, Cook said.

Cook said the actual dismantlement rate will change over any period of months, slowing at times while improvements are put in place or due to complicating factors, but

There was no immediate response to follow-up questions, including the characterization of the dismantlement activity being at "historically high levels," even though declassified information released by the Dept. of Defense