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Final load of debris shipped from K-25 Building demolition project

Oak Ridge, Tenn. – The final truckload of debris from the K-25 Building demolition project was shipped from East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP) today.

The K-25 Building, located at the East Tennessee Technology Park (the former Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant), was built in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project. At that time, K-25 was the world's largest building under one roof. Demolition of the mile-long, U-shaped structure was completed in December 2013. Since then, workers have focused on removing the resulting demolition debris.

Because the final section of the building contained components that were contaminated with a slow-decaying radioactive isotope called technetium-99, workers had to segregate the contaminated components in the field. Workers simplified that process by painting the components with higher contamination bright blue before demolition. These higher-contamination components were shipped off-site for disposal, with the remainder of the debris going to the Environmental Management Waste Management Facility located on DOE's Oak Ridge Reservation.

"As this phase of the project is completed, it's a good time to remember the many people who were responsible constructing, operating, and demolishing this historically significant facility," said Mark Whitney, manager of the Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management. "The people who built K-25 under intense schedules, the operators who helped our nation succeed through World War II and the Cold War, and the cleanup crews that were able to safely demolish and transport waste from the Department's largest-ever demolition project despite challenges."

The K-25 Building operated until 1964, producing enriched uranium for defense and commercial purposes. During the past decades, as the facility deteriorated, its demolition was considered among the highest priorities for the environmental cleanup program in Oak Ridge.

The K-25 Building demolition project began in December 2008, when Bechtel Jacobs Company LLC started demolition of the west wing. URS|CH2M Oak Ridge LLC (UCOR) took over the

project in August 2011 and successfully completed demolition of the building's east wing and north end. Wastes that have been hauled from the site include 6,000 compressors, 3,000 converters, 187,000 cubic yards of steel, 3,800 miles of electrical conductors, and 1.2 million cubic feet of asbestos insulation. In total, more than 460,000 cubic yards of K-25 waste have been shipped for disposal.

“While this final load of waste was just one in thousands of shipments that have been made, it represents so much more,” said Leo Sain, UCOR President and Project Manager. “A great deal of planning and careful execution has allowed us to finish this project safely and ahead of schedule, bringing a successful end to the largest demolition project DOE has ever undertaken.”

Although the K-25 Building is gone, the historical significance of the facility and the complex remains. In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, in 2012, the Department signed a Memorandum of Agreement with 12 signatory/consulting parties, which plans for ways to commemorate and interpret the historic significance of the site. DOE's Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management will construct an equipment building that recreates a scale representation of the gaseous diffusion technology. In addition, the site will display equipment, artifacts, oral histories, photographs and videos at a K-25 History Center on site.

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Photo is attached and available on Flickr.



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