



National Nuclear Security Administration **Y-12 Site Office News**

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NNSA AUTHORIZES RESTART OF KEY Y-12 FACILITY *Process is Final Step to Full Production Operations*

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. -- The final process in the Y-12 National Security Complex's ability to produce purified uranium metal is back in operation after being shut down for more than a decade.

Bill Brumley, Y-12 site manager for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), has given BWXT Y-12, the company that operates Y-12 for NNSA, authorization to restart the oxide conversion facility, a process that converts uranium oxide into a uranium compound called green salt, which is then converted to uranium metal.

Start-up of the oxide conversion facility means that Y-12 has taken the final step to return to full production operations.

"This is an important step. That last piece of the puzzle is now in place. It's been a lot of hard work by a lot of people, both on the part of my staff and BWXT Y-12. I want to thank every one of them for their dedication and determination in achieving this important milestone," Brumley said.

Dennis Ruddy, president and general manager of BWXT Y-12, said restart of the facility is a "big step for Y-12. With all the pieces in place, it means that we are once again a fully operational manufacturing facility. We are going to go forward in all phases of operations while executing them safely and securely."

The oxide conversion facility was shut down in 1992 following an accidental release of hydrogen fluoride, a hazardous, corrosive gas. The facility was not part of the September 1994 stand-down in which virtually all operations at Y-12 were halted because of safety concerns raised by the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

In the years since it was shut down, a new oxide conversion facility was designed and built incorporating new equipment and state-of-the art safety systems to contain any

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potential releases of the material. Authorization for restarting the process followed rigorous training for operators and certification of facilities. Operational readiness assessments were conducted by both internal and external review teams prior to authorization for restart.

Y-12 recaptures and recycles virtually all of the enriched uranium used in plant operations. Oxide conversion is a key piece of the process through which material is recycled. Other steps that allow the full recycling and recovery of uranium were the reduction pour up operations that resumed in 2001 and wet chemistry operations that restarted in 2004.

“Not having the oxide conversion facility up and running left a gap in our ability to fully recycle everything, from scrap from the floor to mop heads and recover even minute amounts of uranium. With the OCF operational, that gap is now closed,” said Robbie Cordani, manager of Chemical Processing Production.

Y-12 is a key part of the national nuclear weapons complex. It manufactures parts from uranium and other special materials, specializing in the second stage of warheads. Y-12 also is responsible for the disassembly of warhead components and recycling of usable materials. It is the nation’s storehouse for weapons-usable special nuclear material.

BWXT Y-12 is an enterprise of BWX Technologies and Bechtel National Inc. that operates the Y-12 National Security Complex for the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad

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