



Plutonium Facility upgrades receive praise from NNSA

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LANL project called a 'model' for other labs

The CMRR Plutonium Facility (PF-4) equipment installation, phase 1 work within the operating facility that was recently completed at Los Alamos National Laboratory received high marks from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). When the project team completed transition to operation scope and turned over the analytical chemistry equipment to the end-users in August 2020, they did so 10 months early and several million dollars under budget. For a federally funded project with a multi-million-dollar price tag – that's a big deal.

Crew members set-up new gloveboxes.

"We demonstrated that we can execute line item projects safely, securely – and inside of PF-4 – and be successful," said Area Project Manager Benjie Martinez. "This is a huge compliment to everyone who worked on the project."

NNSA Associate Administrator for Acquisition and Project Management Bob Raines took note. During the recent project review of the completed work, Raines indicated that he will present it as the model for future line item projects and other national laboratories in the U.S. Department of Energy complex to follow.

Project work within PF-4 wraps a year early, under budget

The key to coming in early and under budget for a project this big was multi-faceted. Eric Chavez, Project Manager, outlined several reasons why the project succeeded.

"Teamwork and communication were the biggest reasons we did so well," Chavez explained. "Everyone across all of the project functions and facility operations worked together. And, we kept the same project leadership during the M&O [Management and Operating] contract transition, which also helped us stay consistent and on track."

In addition to applying overall sound project management principles, some other important aspects came into play:

- The project manager understood the PF-4 operations and limitations;
- The project team engaged in very aggressive risk mitigation and management;
- The facility users and the project owner representative were involved in the project every step of the way.

PEI1 X-Ray Diffractometers, completed in 2017, are used to examine plutonium in support of production and research.

Now that the Plutonium Facility Equipment Installation-Phase 1 (PEI1) work within PF-4 is complete, some of the work that was conducted at the aged Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility (CMR) will transition to PF-4.

The Plutonium Facility is known for its nuclear material research that strengthens the Nation's nuclear stockpile. The facility also supports NASA deep-space missions with reactor fuels and heat sources.

While the project scope within PF-4 is complete, ongoing PEI-1 infrastructure scope is wrapping up as well. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are finishing the construction of a warehouse and a TA-55 construction support building, with an estimated completion date of November 2020. Once these final project elements are completed, the project will request final project closeout from the NNSA administrator.

Left: Warehouse under construction. Right: Warehouse for craft support.

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