



For more information contact:
Hal McCune – URS/UMCDF Protocol
(541) 564-7304 – Cell: 541-215-2651

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UMCDF surpasses 9 million safe hours

UMATILLA CHEMICAL DEPOT, Hermiston, Ore. – The Umatilla Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (UMCDF) has surpassed 9 million hours without a lost workday accident. As of Sept. 19, it has been 1,900 days, or more than five years, since a UMCDF employee missed work because of an accident.

This is the first time UMCDF has reached 9 million safe hours, which is the equivalent of 100 employees working more than 43 years without missing a day of work due to an accident. UMCDF has about 830 workers. The Safety Department verified the milestone Tuesday and determined it was reached Monday morning.

“What’s most important about that number is it means our people are not getting injured at work,” said Steven Warren, project general manager for URS, the company that built and operates the chemical demilitarization plant on the depot. “Our goal is to send our workers home in the same condition they were in when they came to work. And when our employees work safely, it means we are keeping the community and environment safe as well.”

One measurement of the effectiveness of a company’s safety culture is its rolling (or 12-month) recordable injury rate (RIR). OSHA describes a recordable injury as one that requires medical attention, ranging from injuries that require stitches or prescription drugs to more serious injuries. UMCDF has a RIR of .70, or well under one recordable injury for every 200,000 work hours.

The 9-million mark is remarkable, Warren said, especially considering the heavy industrial work that’s done regularly at UMCDF. For example, workers frequently are involved in mechanical and electrical work, welding and crane operations.

The management at UMCDF points to the project’s employee-led teams, which focus on safety and environmental compliance, as one key to keeping workers safe. The project was designated a Volunteer Protection Program (VPP) Star site by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) more than four years ago. VPP Star status represents the highest safety recognition issued by the federal government. It is OSHA’s official recognition of the outstanding efforts of employers and employees who have achieved exemplary occupational safety and health.

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