

The Value of Demolition

Nothing says success in decontamination and decommissioning like a building demolition. There's something about seeing a building reduced first to a pile of rubble and then to a bare concrete slab—or better still, a patch of green lawn—that gives credibility to decommissioning plans, schedules, and goals.

At the same time, there's something infinitely sad about watching a used and useful facility turn to dust. Buildings that functioned for 20, 30, 40 years or more are today extraneous. In some cases, that's a good thing. Thanks to the end of the Cold War and the weapons race, we no longer need such huge uranium and plutonium production complexes. Thus, such sites as Fernald, Rocky Flats, and Hanford have become largely redundant. Yet for thousands of workers who made good livings by working in those buildings—while raising families, educating children, growing nest eggs toward future retirement—seeing these buildings come down must be a bittersweet moment—not unlike seeing your old, dilapidated childhood school building come down to make way for a more modern, technology-friendly structure. Many memories can be

lodged in each brick, concrete block, doorway, window, and roof, bringing a moment of sadness to the joy of making room for something newer and better.

Nonetheless, in a clear demonstration of how a picture is worth a thousand words, we can *tell* people—the public, the media, the antinukes, the decommissioning workers—about progress at decommissioning sites, but a good building implosion can say so much more. Indeed, many D&D sites have invited regulatory and government officials, other stakeholders, and the media to publicized building implosions, as one more way to prove that work is progressing.

In this issue, we take a look at a lot of building demolition—both step-by-step photos from a single building demolition project at Hanford (see pp. 11–15) and a 10-year project to bring down 10 buildings at Fernald (see pp. 24–28).

At Hanford, a “free air” demolition of the site's Plutonium Concentration Facility integrated techniques from across the DOE complex, at the same time promising to be a benchmark for future projects. Over a period of several months, through all kinds of weather (one of the worst



*Take it
down,
take it
ALL down.*



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winters on record in southeastern Washington state), shears and saws reduced a highly contaminated building to manageable-sized pieces, with no recordable injuries to the workers.

At Fernald, between 1994 and the spring of 2004, workers brought down the 10 uranium processing building, using both implosion techniques and shear cutting. Building demolition was essential so that workers can begin to address the concrete and soil contamination beneath the building structures.

When buildings come down, we can spend a brief moment to recall the work that was done there and those who did the work. But then we can take pride that, step by step, the cleanup jobs we have undertaken are that much closer to being finished.—*Nancy J. Zacha, Editor*