

Twelve structures from a former Las Vegas casino complex were removed completely to their foundations, and the north tower basement was backfilled with crushed concrete from the demolition and compacted to 98% of proctor. The buildings totaled 583,047 sq ft, and demolition required more than 26,000 man-hours.



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Demolition & Recycling Today

Building Deconstruction

Finding the right teams proves challenging in today's market

By Linda Mastaglio

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Building a Future in Demolition

As so many industries will attest today, finding—and keeping—a quality labor force is a key concern. This is true as well in the demolition business. Companies must often hire and train available workers who may see the opportunity as a temporary paycheck rather than a serious job. With large projects, additional union labor is brought in, but those individuals may not necessarily be well-versed in the deconstruction processes and safety practices required by the specific demolition company. It can be a difficult balance of getting enough people to just do the work and attracting qualified people who can truly do it well.

“Finding quality operators and burners can be a challenge, especially when times are good,” says Dean Reader, director of operations with North American Dismantling Corp. “Finding true ‘burners’ vs. ‘melters’ who can process material safely yet quickly is tough.” Reader says that the problem is further aggravated when trying to find mechanics who understand and know how to wrench on their companies’ specialty demolition equipment.



Brandenburg demolished and remediated 33 structures on the Cambers Works Complex in Deepwater, N.J.



Throughout the demolition of a 12-building casino complex, dust and debris management were orchestrated to minimize impact on pedestrians and commercial establishments near this downtown Las Vegas location.

Finding workers who will willingly travel is another current issue. In generations past, construction teams knew they were required to go where the work was; to temporarily relocate for the sake of a paycheck. However, today’s workers are not as agreeable to leaving family and personal obligations to take work out of the area or state.

To train the next generation, most firms depend on a variety of sources. Video courses, safety training seminars, webinars developed by product manufacturers and on-the-job training all play into the mix.

“We invest in the continued development of a new labor force to take over for the retiring, long-term, loyal tradesmen, our ‘seasoned veterans,’” Reader says. “The veterans will mentor the new guys to teach them how to work safely and, if you will, efficiently. The younger generation with less field experience does not recognize the real dangers or the ways to control the dangers. Assigning them to seasoned veterans is a must so that they can be properly mentored and perform with safety first on their minds.”

Risk vs. Reward

Bill Schaab, vice president of American Demolition and Nuclear Decommissioning, sees sector challenges from a different perspective. “The greatest challenge in the demolition business today continues to be the longtime economic challenge of risk versus reward, which is caused by contractors taking unnecessary risks on the backs of their employees in exchange for economic benefit,” he says. “Unfortunately, there is not a year that goes by where we do not hear about a building or structure that falls onto workers due to premature collapse, resulting in either death or debilitating lifelong injuries to the workers who were performing those tasks.”

Schaab believes that the challenge to both demolition contractors and the owners doing the hiring is how to perform work in as safe a manner as possible with the minimal amount of risk. He concludes, “Failure of the demolition sector to raise the bar to a higher standard of safety will surely result in tougher regulations and more regulatory oversight.” ♦

Pivotal Deconstruction of West Valley Nuclear Waste Site

The Dept. of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management

and its cleanup contractor CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley (CHBWV) safely completed the demolition of the vitrification facility at the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP). This accomplishment was no small feat considering that its removal represented the largest and most complex demolition of a radioactively contaminated facility at the WVDP to date. It is also the only vitrification facility in the United States to be built, successfully operated and safely demolished.

The site of a former nuclear fuel-reprocessing plant near Ashford, N.Y., WVDP has been in remediation for decades, and today the site continues to achieve new milestones as the team approaches the end of its contract in March 2020.

As the DOE's prime contractor, CHBWV worked with American Demolition and Nuclear Decommissioning (American DND). The building was deconstructed in phases, beginning with the removal of reinforced concrete walls. Specialized tools and various forms of heavy equipment were required to remove the complex equipment within the building. The team extracted



American DND crews remove stairs from the Utility Room Extension Building, one of seven ancillary support structures included in demolition on this remediation site.

four in-cell coolers, each weighing more than 7,000 lbs; a 38,000-lb process crane; and six shield windows and two massive doors, weighing 60 and 100 tons, respectively. The demolition was completed in one year, despite weather delays.

The West Valley team recorded no lost-time injuries, radiological releases or environmental issues throughout the process. And earlier this year, it achieved another milestone: completing more than a million man-hours without a single lost-time incident.

An innovative use of an open-air monitoring system was implemented around the perimeter and inside the demolition area, which recorded air data in real time and helped ensure worker safety. The innovation was recognized with special honors at the DOE's Waste Management Symposia this past April.

Demolition of Ancillary Support Structures

As part of its work, the team has already demolished four out of seven ancillary support structures that surround the Main Plant Process Building. In April, the former laundry facility was removed, including the hot-side duct work where potentially

contaminated clothing was processed. In July, demolition was completed to remove the Utility Room Extension Building that was used to solidify high-level liquid radioactive waste from 1996 to 2002.

Added Innovation Aids Safety

A deactivation and decommissioning crew developed a conveyor system to safely remove asbestos-containing material (ACM) from inside the Main Plant Process Building. The wall plaster on several floors of the building contained ACM, which was removed prior to demolition.

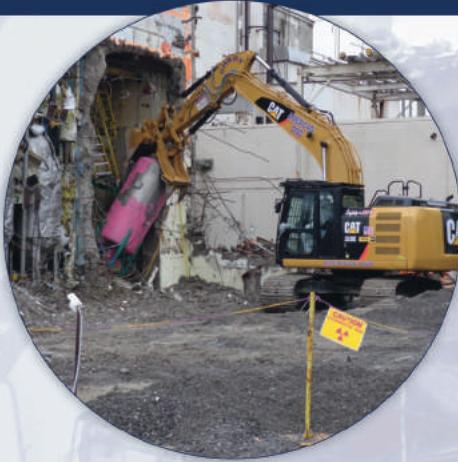
To increase safety and limit the amount of contact with asbestos materials, workers helped design, test and build a conveyor system for the ACM work. Using lessons learned from a previous ACM job, the conveyor system used readily available equipment, making it easier and less expensive to build.

Work at the site continues to be performed safely and compliantly. Main Plant deactivation is 98% complete, four of seven ancillary support structures have been demolished, and 44 of 47 facilities have been removed and the areas restored. ♦



CHBWV employees and subcontractors worked with American DND to tear down West Valley's vitrification facility.

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