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Mission Support Alliance: HAMMER Training & Education Center

(NOTE: MSA manages HAMMER for the Department of Energy)

As progress continues with the cleanup of the Hanford Site, workers still face potentially hazardous conditions daily. The Volpentest HAMMER Federal Training Center, managed by Mission Support Alliance for the Department of Energy (DOE), operates to protect the health and safety of Hanford's workforce, emergency responders and the public through high quality hands-on training that is as "real as it gets."

HAMMER, along with others at Hanford, faced some challenges this past year. Yet its staff remained focused on maintaining a flexible outlook for delivering safety training while clocking in 64,500 student training days. Matt McCormick, manager for DOE-RL, once said, "A well-trained workforce is the foundation of safety, and safe work starts with HAMMER." HAMMER's goal is to deliver outstanding health and safety training for Hanford's workforce and emergency responders. Additionally, HAMMER strives to establish long-term business partnerships with other federal agencies and supports existing agency agreements with federal and non-federal customers.

Glenn Podonsky, DOE's chief health, safety and security officer, recently lauded HAMMER for its "spectacular" efforts in helping to achieve sitewide safety standards for the Hanford workforce. HAMMER also is expanding its offerings through leveraging Hanford's strong safety and health programs and Hanford's 15 sitewide safety standards through a partnership with DOE's National Training Center (NTC).

HAMMER, NTC, and a collaboration of labor and management stakeholders are creating reciprocal programs and eliminating duplicate training. These programs already are yielding significant benefits to all parties, including DOE, site contractors, and employees by saving time, money, and yielding a better-trained workforce across the DOE complex.

More than a year ago, MSA purchased a slip simulator for HAMMER to train Hanford workers. The slip simulator utilizes kinetic learning to teach workers how to walk properly on slippery surfaces. Other companies who use the simulator, such as United Parcel Service, have seen up to a 70 percent reduction in worker slips, trips and falls, and we expect similar results with its ongoing use here at Hanford. Safety equipment like the slip simulator, combined with the 15 sitewide safety standards implemented in recent years, has produced a 55 percent reduction in recordable injuries for MSA since beginning its contract.

Since its inception, HAMMER has always appreciated its strong collaborative partnership with labor that focused on the overall health and safety of Hanford workers. Recently, HAMMER received significant recognition and support from national labor leaders at the Labor Roundtable meeting with Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

Another important relationship HAMMER has is with DOE's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE). As the lead office for DOE's Energy Response effort, OE provides national experts in elements of the energy sector to help state, local, and tribal governments recover from events that damage any part of the energy sector. MSA provides key support through HAMMER to provide training to DOE responders across the complex, develops and facilitates regional exercises to ensure continuity of response between agencies and coordinates with FEMA and other federal agencies during large-scale energy events. Since 2003, HAMMER staff has responded to all of our nation's major storms including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike, Gustov, and Super Storm Sandy.

HAMMER also provides access to the facility for many other DOE organizations and federal agencies. A new program with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Pipeline Hazardous Material and Safety Administration provides education and outreach for DOT's grant program.

DOE and MSA continue to invest in upgrades to HAMMER's curriculum, facilities and new technology that will improve the quality of training. HAMMER staff continues to develop creative course content and technological deployment to expand its training. This has led to improved training and reduced costs, and has positioned HAMMER to be ready to respond to emergent training and special requests that have become common with project priority changes in a dynamic budget environment.

HAMMER continues to play a key role in Hanford's mission by providing state-of-the-art, high-quality safety and health training. HAMMER will continue to provide expertise and facility access to other organizations, and develop strategies for supporting future training needs and ensure the ongoing success of Hanford's cleanup mission.

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