



## PRESS STATEMENT

Immediate Release  
January 13, 2012

Contact: Tom Carpenter, 206-419-5829  
[tomc@hanfordchallenge.org](mailto:tomc@hanfordchallenge.org)

### **Hanford Challenge calls for stand-down, new leadership to tackle broken safety culture and suppressed problems**

*Seattle, WA:* In response to the Department of Energy's report released today finding a "significant number of staff " are reluctant to raise safety or quality concerns, Hanford Challenge is calling for a safety stand-down at the Hanford Waste Treatment Plant, and for a change in leadership at the project to tackle the problems detailed in the [report](#).

The Department of Energy's Office of Health, Safety and Security released a report that found widespread safety culture problems that showcased a fear of reprisal for raising safety and other concerns at Hanford's Waste Treatment Plant.

The report revealed a telling statistic: "Overall, only 30% of all survey respondents feel that they can openly challenge decisions made by management," and only half of those surveyed felt they could approach management with concerns. (Supplemental Report, p. 7)

Tom Carpenter, of Hanford Challenge praised the report, "This report is a frank acknowledgement of what the Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board found six months ago – too many employees in key positions are unwilling to raise concerns that could impact public health and safety or the future safe operation of this important and potentially dangerous facility.

Carpenter also stated, "Hanford Challenge expects to see a change in leadership that is capable of tackling Hanford's broken safety culture and ensuring that problems are addressed and issues raised without fear."

The DOE's Office of Health Safety and Security noted: "In this atmosphere, instances where individuals perceive that their concerns about design questions are not listened to, that management does not want to hear problems, that technical dissent is suppressed, and that blame is being assigned unfairly are almost inevitable" (p viii).

Hanford Challenge called on Secretary Steven Chu to order an immediate safety stand-down at the Waste Treatment Plant. "There are too many outstanding unresolved safety and design

issues to justify continued construction at the Pre-Treatment Facility,” said Carpenter. “It is unconscionable to punt these problems down the road. An audit is needed to affirm what safety concerns are out there that people have been afraid to raise that need to be investigated. This course of action would be normal for the commercial nuclear sector. We should demand nothing less of the nuclear weapons complex.”

Hanford Challenge is concerned that nothing in the corrective actions suggested by the HSS investigation team deals with the issue of how to cure the problem now. Carpenter said “The bigger question now is whether the Department is capable of taking action in real-time. There are numerous publicly profiled whistleblowers whose allegations have been unaddressed and concerns shoved under the carpet. Until the Department learns how to deal with retaliation, reprisals and concerns in real-time, we will continue to see reports like this.”