

Airline suit work restarts in redundant laboratories

News story

Airline suit work has restarted at Dounreay after more than a year's delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Wearing an airline suit is cumbersome and the wearer needs to be dressed and undressed by a dedicated team of helpers who then provide support throughout the task. Work was put on hold in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in social distancing being introduced, and the safety of Dounreay's workforce became of paramount importance. Now, as restrictions are being lifted, the site is able to restart projects where hazardous conditions require the wearing of airline suits.

The team that has been decommissioning the redundant low level effluent treatment plant is supporting the refresher training of their colleagues. Project Manager Mick O'Donnell said:

They are supporting the practical airline suit training by running through the physical training, including the use of tools, to simulate the arduous working conditions that you would have when doing physical work in an airline suit.

Project Manager Jason Simpson's team is decommissioning the redundant laboratories in the Fuel Cycle Area (FCA). Much of the work is carried out in airline suits due to the radiological hazards in the cluster of 40 cells designed to analyse and test materials used in reactors and reprocessing plants.

Jason explained that before the work restarted, the team went through the airline suit refresher training and procedures were updated to take account of the changed conditions caused by the COVID-19 virus. He added:

We are grateful for the help of other departments, who delivered the refresher training and revisited the safe systems of work to ensure all safety aspects of the work had been considered.

The latest laboratory to be cleaned up is Lab 103. Although it is one of the smaller laboratories, the operators still size reduced and removed over 40 bins (approximately 8 tonnes) of waste and redundant equipment from the laboratory.

Becky Ruddy, Head of FCA Decommissioning, said of the teams recent return to airline suit work:

Jason, Mick and the wider teams have worked extremely hard to develop a safe way of working which incorporates COVID-19 requirements as well as all the other requirements we need to consider as part of any decommissioning project on a daily basis.

This hard work and determination has enabled us to resume progress against our company mission of working together to responsibly deliver the Dounreay programme efficiently and effectively. Well done and thanks to everyone involved.

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