

Success Story: NIEHS/DOE Worker Training

A Win-Win for Los Alamos National Laboratory,
DOE contractors, and worker safety

Overview

Over the past five years, the partnership between the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), [CPWR—The Center for Construction Research and Training](#), and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) has made thousands of construction workers at DOE’s Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico safer.

LANL was established as a top-secret site for designing and assembling nuclear weapons during World War II. Construction workers are actively excavating contaminated soil, monitoring groundwater, and decontaminating surplus buildings on the site. The [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\)/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program](#) provides funding to nonprofits to deliver site-specific health and safety training for workers within the complex.

As part of the program, NIEHS connected LANL to CPWR America’s leading nonprofit dedicated to reducing injuries, illnesses, and fatalities among construction workers. CPWR’s team of skilled trainers can teach a wide range of safety courses to a wide range of workers. Its expertise fits well with the Worker Training Program’s goal of preparing DOE site workers to work safely by showing them how to protect themselves and their coworkers in hazardous environments—and do so at no cost to the contractor.

A Time- and Money-Saving DOE Investment

NIEHS WTP/DOE Training: A Smart Financial Decision

DOE contractors have mandatory training requirements to ensure that all workers have the information they need to stay safe on the job. Nonprofits funded by NIEHS WTP/DOE can provide training at no cost to contractors, potentially saving them thousands of dollars.

Since 2023, CPWR **trained over 1,340 workers** for N3B, ultimately **saving the contractor over \$320,000** in training costs.

In 2023, N3B (Newport News Nuclear BWXT Los Alamos LLC), a new DOE cleanup contractor at LANL, contacted CPWR about hazardous waste training for its workers. N3B’s subject matter experts collaborated with CPWR’s to tailor the course to the company’s unique needs. Soon, CPWR was teaching additional courses on NFPA 70e Electrical Safety, ladder safety, advanced pressure systems, and first aid on behalf of N3B. In 2024 alone, over 300 workers at LANL received training from CPWR.

“Thanks to our NIEHS funding, training for all of those workers was completely free for N3B,” said Gary Gustafson, director of the CPWR Environmental Hazards Training Program.

“The contractor saved money, and workers are we protected from harm.” The NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program also allows just-in-time training by seamlessly integrating nonprofit organizations like CPWR into DOE’s structure. CPWR’s trainers can adjust curricula to address the specific needs of a DOE site where the training is needed, allowing them to respond to contractor and worker needs without delay.

Recently, N3B became aware of an urgent need for fall protection training for LANL workers. Because of CPWR’s existing relationship with LANL from the NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program, it could begin teaching fall protection courses almost immediately.

“We wouldn’t have been aware of this need without our partnership with NIEHS, and the contractor would likely have had to find a for-profit organization to do the training instead,” said Gustafson. “With this program, we were able to jump in quickly.”

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Quality-Assured Training Across DOE

Even when training DOE workers on short notice, CPWR’s courses maintain the highest standards of excellence and rigor. A key reason for this is the NIEHS WTP Minimum Criteria, which sets standards for courses delivered by WTP-funded nonprofits, so workers receive training that adheres to the most up-to-date adult learning principles.

“The Minimum Criteria shapes our work, so all of our training is already up to DOE’s standards,” said Gustafson. “It’s another reason we can move quickly but still make sure people are trained correctly in our courses.”

Additionally, CPWR is one of many WTP-funded nonprofits that are part of the DOE National Training Center’s Reciprocity Certification Program. This program certifies training courses that meet all federal regulations, national consensus standards, and DOE directives, enabling workers who take these courses to transfer their training across DOE. Gustafson credits the relationship between NIEHS WTP and the DOE National Training Center for helping CPWR qualify for the Reciprocity Certification Program.

The Takeaway

To him, DOE worker training from WTP-funded nonprofits is a positive for everyone.

“Thanks to NIEHS and DOE, our training is free for DOE contractors, saving them the time and money they would have taken to find and employ a for-profit training company,” said Gustafson. “The workers get gold-standard training for free, and DOE contractors don’t have to pay for workers to receive duplicative training when moving from one site to another. Most importantly, we help workers stay safe so they can go home, unharmed, at the end of the day.”

At Los Alamos National Laboratory in 2025, CPWR:



Delivered 60 training courses



Trained 777 workers



Delivered 9,822 contact hours



Provided courses on topics like general construction safety, first aid, and basic Superfund worker training