

Small Business Innovation Helps Los Alamos National Laboratory Save the Environment

Los Alamos National Laboratory
Small Business Office Press Release
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A small technical company out of Florida has proven their workforce may be tiny, but their ideas are nothing but big. UltraTech International, Inc. has developed a prototype that is helping the Los Alamos National Laboratory save nearly \$2.5 million when it comes to storing contaminated Waste.

Michael Pearson of the Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship Division (RRES) discovered the capabilities of UltraTech International Inc. during a conference, sponsored by the Laboratory's Materials Management Department (BUS-4). Pearson was struggling to find a company that would develop a neutron shield made of polyethylene. The current prototype of was made of polyester resin and cost about \$4,000 per unit; however the polyethylene is much more reliable and less costly to produce.

Neutron shields are placed in 55-gallon containers that are used to store contaminated waste, such as neutron sources used in the well-logging industry. The containers are currently produced by Westinghouse Electric Corporation, a major contractor of the Los Alamos National Laboratory; however, since UltraTech International Inc. is a subcontractor of Westinghouse, Pearson decided to give them a shot in developing the neutron shield.

"Westinghouse and Packaging Technology Inc. are our two biggest contractors; however, when I requested that the neutron shield be made of polyethylene and at 6 inches thick, they thought it was impossible, but fortunately Mark Shaw of UltraTech International, Inc., was willing to take on the challenge," said Pearson.

While the neutron shield is just a certain part of the container, it does play a crucial role in Pearson's team's effort to complete the Off-Site Source Recovery Project (OSRP), mandated by the Department of Energy (DOE). "We were given \$10 million to retrieve excess radioactive materials, found around the United States, by April 2004," said Pearson. "By UltraTech creating the neutron shield prototype, we are now able to meet our deadline."

Not only has UltraTech helped the Laboratory, but themselves by proving to DOE they are capable of finding new ways to store contamination. The provider of environmental containment and spill response products is now working with DOE on other pertinent projects.

"We may be small, but we are a very creative company and that helps us produce innovate, reliable, and inexpensive products," said Mark Shaw, Vice President of UltraTech International Inc.