

## More should join new Hanford council

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Resolving personnel issues quickly and inexpensively is good for any business, but for a Hanford contractor it's crucial.

Without an avenue to voice concerns, workers are more likely to turn their discontent into a legal battle.

At Hanford, such conflicts sometimes drag on for years, costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

Officials with the CH2M Hill Hanford Group and the Government Accountability Project made a great move when they decided to organize an unbiased council designed to hear worker complaints and resolve them internally.

It's a shame more Hanford contractors aren't involved, but at least this is a start. The new Hanford Concerns Council will include three representatives of CH2M Hill, three advocates for workers and three neutral members. Jonathan Brock, a professor at the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, is the council's chairman.

Brock played a similar role on the now defunct Hanford Joint Council, which operated from 1994 to 2003.

That group also heard employee complaints and resolved about 50 cases, no doubt preventing a lot of litigation. It ended, however, when the Westinghouse Hanford Co. contract ended.

Now that CH2M Hill and GAP are getting a program going again, Fluor Hanford and other contractors at the site ought to consider joining.

CH2M Hill manages the Hanford tank farm, where workers have raised concerns about safety and health because of chemical vapors that vent from the older tanks of radioactive and hazardous chemical waste. Last year GAP criticized CH2M Hill for not better protecting workers.

Since then, CH2M Hill has made some changes to improve worker safety, but employees naturally are still worried. With the new Hanford Concerns Council, workers will be able to discuss their concerns without fear of retribution.

In addition, CH2M Hill has pledged to implement recommendations of the council as long as they don't violate any legal or contractual responsibilities.

This is a program that makes a lot of sense and has proved to be effective in the past. Other Hanford contractors should see its worth and join in. CH2M Hill and GAP did the right thing by creating it. Now it needs to grow.

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