
Incubator facility ready for high-tech tenants

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Do you need high-bay space to test large-scale robotic or engineering equipment? Are you looking for a cost-effective facility in which to test your remediation technology without having to obtain a hazardous waste permit at each step? Could you benefit from access to national laboratory and university research staff and equipment?

All of these features will be available in the Applied Process Engineering Laboratory, or APEL, a fully permitted research, development and demonstration facility in Richland. The 90,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to open in April, but tenants are making reservations for occupancy now. "We expect the building to be fully occupied with technology-based enterprises by next year," said Chuck Allen, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's manager for the facility.

The north Richland facility includes 37,000 square feet of laboratory and technology incubator space, 20,000 square feet of 28-foot high-bay space and 16,000 square feet of office space. APEL can support a wide range of tenants, such as entrepreneurs, small companies building prototypes for demonstration to potential investors and companies with environmental technologies that can be tested and demonstrated before use.

Business services such as a telephone answering service, copy machine, receptionist, U.S. mail and package receiving are free to tenants as are access to lunch room and conference rooms and normal-use electrical and water utilities. Tenants also have access to a fax machine, Internet computer, 90-day waste storage and permitted waste storage.

One of APEL's unique selling points is an umbrella research and development test permit under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act from the Washington State Department of Ecology. "This permit will allow APEL users to perform a wide range of R&D activities without requiring a specific permit for each test or activity," Allen said. "No one else in the Pacific Northwest has a permitted facility like this."

About one-third of the space will be occupied by two core tenants: the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Washington State University. Laboratory researchers will use APEL to conduct pilot-scale technology development work, and researchers from WSU's Tri-Cities branch campus will conduct agricultural and environmental sciences research. "These tenants provide added value to APEL customers because of the onsite technical and entrepreneurial support they represent," Allen said.

Startup businesses can remain at APEL for approximately three years. After that time, companies "graduate" from the business incubation program to lease commercial space in the community and create new jobs. The Port of Benton, working with private developers, will help new companies become fully functional commercial enterprises as they leave APEL.

The facility is being funded through an innovative collaborative arrangement that matches funds from the Department of Energy's Office of Worker and Community Transition Program with grants and resources from the Washington Public Power Supply System, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, the Port of Benton, the City of Richland and Washington State University. "This arrangement enables us to offer space at a favorable cost," said Allen.

For more information, contact Chuck Allen at APEL at (509) 372-5146.