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First Look at Grand Island's New Uranium Treatment System

An explanation of Grand Island's new \$3 million water uranium treatment system sound surprisingly simple.

"The water flows through the bottom and flows upwards and kind of suspends this bed of resin and the water's treated and out it goes," explains GI Utilities Director Tim Luchsinger during a tour of the new facility.

Water Remediation Technologies (WRT), the Colorado company that will be monitoring and maintaining the system says there's no hum of machinery because the artificial resin, also known as the treatment media, that the water passes through does most of the work.

"At that time the uranium absorbs itself onto the treatment media, the water goes on through now missing it's uranium, the uranium stays in the vessel," says Ron Dollar, WRT Vice President of Sales and Marketing.

Officials say the system will treat about 1.5 billion gallons of water every year without any chemicals.

Luchsinger says the treatment system is possibly the largest of its kind in the country, and a chance for GI to be a model for other communities.

"It's kind of a lessons learned for both [Grand Island and WRT] as far as over the next few years how this system operates, what type of adjustments we need to make, how it performs, what they might have to do to make sure it's running correctly," he says.

Officials say that another benefit to this system is that they can add on, either in the same facility, or elsewhere.

"We could easily go back to this pipeline in the back, add on to this building, and put more treatment trains in this, or duplicate this exact building out here for some of the other wells in this well field," says Dollar.

WRT says they've been contracted by Grand Island for the next ten years, and will also be in charge of changing out the treatment media and disposing of the used resin at a low-level radioactive waste site.

While uranium can cause health issues, it's naturally occurring, and GI officials say their levels are not above EPA limits.

However, rising numbers in the Platte River valley had GI looking to proactively treat their water now instead of looking for a costly solution later.

