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# Dever says new duties not related to OR controversy

**By Frank Munger**

News-Sentinel senior writer

**OAK RIDGE** - In a surprise announcement Thursday, the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge manager said she will report to Washington later this month for a temporary assignment at agency headquarters.

Leah Dever, who came to Oak Ridge a year and half ago, told staff members she was accepting a job detail - expected to last about 90 days - as acting chief operating officer in DOE's Office of Science.

The timing of the announcement raised eyebrows in Oak Ridge because Dever has been at the center of a controversy over land use on DOE's 34,000-acre reservation.

Dever, however, insisted the assignment in Washington had nothing to do with the Oak Ridge controversy.

"These are two totally separate issues that just seem to come together," she said Thursday.

The DOE official said she volunteered for the headquarters assignment a few weeks ago to help out during the management transition to the new administration, headed by Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham. Many of the top posts in DOE are being filled on an acting basis until political appointments can be made and confirmed.

Dever will assume the position currently held by Milt Johnson, who in turn will move up to deputy director of DOE's Office of Science in the transition. Jim Decker, the deputy director, is

now serving as acting director.

"It's a very positive thing for both me and the Oak Ridge (Operations) office," she said.

Ed Cumesty, the Oak Ridge deputy, will serve as Oak Ridge manager in Dever's absence.

Dever said she looked forward to the Washington assignment because she will serve as a liaison to Oak Ridge and other field operations connected with DOE's Office of Science. She said she will learn more about how issues are dealt with at other sites, as well as promote some Oak Ridge activities.

One of the hot issues in Oak Ridge has been land use on the federal reservation. The business community generally favors opening up more land for industrial development, while other groups are pushing for preservation of undisturbed property for ecological research and recreation.

DOE confirmed earlier this week that Dever planned to order a full-scale environmental impact statement on Oak Ridge land use before proceeding - a move that could delay some industrial projects by a couple of years or longer. That announcement was postponed, however, after U.S. Zach Wamp, R-Tenn., met with Decker in Washington. Wamp said he was assured he would be given a full update on any land-use studies before a final decision is made.

Dever said she plans to discuss the Oak Ridge land issues with senior managers at DOE headquarters in Washington.

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