

Cleanup Progress at Hanford

The U.S. Department of Energy is responsible for one of the largest nuclear cleanup efforts in the world, managing the legacy of five decades of nuclear weapons production. At its peak, this national weapons complex consisted of 16 major facilities, including vast reservations of land in the States of Idaho, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington.

Nowhere in the DOE Complex is cleanup more challenging than at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington. Hanford made more than 20 million pieces of uranium metal fuel for nine nuclear reactors along the Columbia River. Five huge plants in the center of the Hanford Site processed 110,000 tons of fuel from the reactors, discharging an estimated 450 billion gallons of liquids to soil disposal sites and 56 million gallons of radioactive waste to 177 large underground tanks. Plutonium production ended in the late 1980s.

Hanford cleanup began in 1989, when a landmark agreement was reached between DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Washington State. Known as the Tri-Party Agreement, the accord established milestones for bringing the Hanford site into compliance with federal and state environmental regulations.

After more than two decades of cleanup, considerable progress has been made at Hanford, reducing the risk the site poses to the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment.

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Hanford Site Cleanup

Before Cleanup Began (1989)	Examples of Cleanup Work Completed
586-square-mile footprint of active cleanup	• 82-square-mile footprint of active cleanup remaining
2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel stored near the Columbia River	• COMPLETED: Moved all spent fuel to dry storage
20 tons of leftover plutonium in the Plutonium Finishing Plant	• COMPLETED: Stabilized and shipped plutonium off-site
1,012 waste sites, 522 facilities, 9 plutonium production reactors near the Columbia River	• 939 waste sites remediated, 428 facilities demolished, 17 million tons soil/debris removed • 6 reactors cocooned (associated facilities demolished), 1 underway, 1 preserved
Groundwater contaminated by past operations	• 12.5 billion gallons treated, 157 tons contamination removed
56 million gallons of waste in 177 underground tanks; up to 67 tanks presumed to have leaked	• Pumpable liquids and 2 million gallons of solids transferred to newer, double-shell tanks • 14 tanks retrieved and 3 more underway
One tank waste retrieval technology available	• 10 retrieval technologies available
No treatment capability for underground tank waste	Waste Treatment Plant under construction – 62 percent complete
15,000 cubic meters of plutonium-contaminated waste buried or stored on site	• 12,417 cubic meters of waste retrieved • 649 shipments of waste off-site
Hanford Site Employment*	
Employees	9,288

*Includes federal employees and employees of Hanford prime contractors and their pre-selected subcontractors (as of June 30, 2015).

For more information, visit www.hanford.gov