



DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
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**RICHLAND**  
OPERATIONS OFFICE  
United States Department of Energy



## **Crews Finish Placing Protective Cover over Tunnel at Hanford Site**

*Cover provides an additional measure of protection for employees, public, environment*

**RICHLAND, Wash.** – Workers over the weekend finished installing a protective cover over a tunnel near the Hanford Site’s Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility (PUREX) that partially collapsed on May 9. The cover will provide additional protection while longer-term risk mitigation measures are developed and implemented.

Using heavy equipment, crews with contractor CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CH2M) placed the cover over the tunnel and secured it on the sides with heavy concrete blocks. Over the next few days, crews will string cables across the cover to provide additional securing.

“Since this event began, our focus has been on protecting our workers, the public, and the environment,” said Doug Shoop, manager of the Department of Energy Richland Operations

Office. "Installing this cover will provide additional protection as we evaluate other actions to further ensure the safe storage of the waste".

There was no spread of contamination after the partial tunnel collapse on May 9 or during emergency response work on May 10 to fill the hole in the tunnel, and no workers were injured in the incident or the response.

The heavy plastic cover has a high density polyethylene woven core and is resistant to puncture, abrasion, chemicals, ultraviolet rays and oxidation. At approximately 40,000 square feet, the protective cover will also limit water intrusion on the approximately eight-foot soil cover over the tunnel.

"The crew did a great job," said Ray Geimer, senior recovery manager for CH2M. "We can't thank them enough for their hard work over the past several days, responding to the incident, securing the scene, preparing for the cover installation and installing the cover."

This week, DOE and CH2M will begin working with the Washington Department of Ecology on additional interim actions to ensure the safe storage of the waste until a permanent disposition decision is made.

[Video footage](#) of cover placement

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*The Department of Energy (DOE) is responsible for the federal government's cleanup of the legacy of more than 40 years of plutonium production at the Hanford Site near Richland, Wash. Except for a tank waste mission managed by the DOE Office of River Protection, the DOE Richland Operations Office is responsible for all remaining Hanford cleanup and is currently focused on cleaning out and demolishing the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and waste, treating contaminated groundwater, moving radioactive sludge out of the K West Basin and away from the Columbia River, and configuring Hanford Site infrastructure for the future. The office oversees Hanford Site work that is conducted by a federal and contractor workforce of approximately 4,000 personnel. Visit [www.hanford.gov](http://www.hanford.gov).*

*CH2M leads the professional services industry delivering sustainable solutions benefiting societal, environmental and economic outcomes with the development of infrastructure and industry. In this way, CH2Mers make a positive difference providing consulting, design, engineering and management services for clients in water; environment and nuclear; transportation; energy and industrial markets, from iconic infrastructure to global programs like the Olympic Games. Ranked among the World's Most Ethical Companies and top firms in environmental consulting and program management, CH2M in 2016 became the first professional services firm honored with the World Environment Center Gold Medal Award for efforts advancing sustainable development. Connect with CH2M at [www.ch2m.com](http://www.ch2m.com); [LinkedIn](#); [Twitter](#); and [Facebook](#).*