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## **U.S. Department of Energy settles with Ecology for Hanford waste management violations**

RICHLAND — The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) have signed an Agreed Order to improve waste management practices in central Hanford and better align those practices with Ecology's requirements to comply with state dangerous waste regulations at three operating facilities that manage hazardous and mixed hazardous and radioactive waste at Hanford.

The three facilities are the Central Waste Complex (CWC), Waste Receiving and Processing Facility (WRAP), and T Plant.

DOE agreed to a stipulated penalty of \$261,000 and will not appeal the Order. DOE will pay \$15,000 immediately, and Ecology will suspend the balance pending DOE completion of corrective actions according to an agreed schedule.

Ecology identified violations of state Dangerous Waste Regulations for Waste Management Units during two inspections at WRAP and CWC in July 2011 and February 2012, respectively. DOE has agreed to address concerns identified at these facilities, as well as T Plant, which is operated together with CWC and WRAP.

"DOE is responsible for ensuring the safe storage of waste and compliance with the dangerous waste regulations," said Ecology Nuclear Waste Program manager Jane Hedges. "DOE cooperated with Ecology staff to identify fixes for the violations and concerns, and has agreed to a schedule to implement the changes."

The Agreed Order requires DOE to make a number of changes in how the agency manages mixed wastes at the three facilities. The changes include:

- More immediate notification to Ecology when there are spills or other incidents.
- Prompt response to incidents when they happen.
- Better reporting on the cause of violations and the corrective actions taken to prevent future incidents.
- Changes in sampling and identifying the chemical nature of stored wastes.
- Proper management of waste containers.
- More frequent inspections covering more features of stored wastes and storage buildings.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CWC facility is primarily used to store mixed waste. It has 300,000 square feet of storage, equal to about six football fields. Storage facilities include seven large buildings, 12 small buildings, 49 storage modules, and six outdoor storage areas. Some of the waste at CWC is awaiting treatment prior to disposal elsewhere on the Hanford site or offsite to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, N.M.

The WRAP facility is adjacent to the CWC and is used to repackage waste stored at CWC and other Hanford locations. It stores and treats mostly transuranic waste and transuranic mixed waste, but also

handles hazardous chemical waste and low-level radioactive waste. WRAP is used for repackaging and treating wastes. Treatment methods include neutralization, compacting, absorbing free liquids, and encapsulation.

T Plant was built in 1943 as Hanford's original "canyon" building to extract plutonium from irradiated reactor fuel. The main building is the size of a cruise ship, with four stories above ground and three stories below ground. The facility is used to store mixed waste.

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**For more information:**

[Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp/index.html) (www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp/index.html)

[Ecology's social media](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/socialmedia.html) (www.ecy.wa.gov/about/socialmedia.html)

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