



PRESS RELEASE

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ENERGY DEPARTMENT MOVES TO ABANDON RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Groups: "Resist Shortcuts to Nuclear Waste Cleanup"

WASHINGTON D.C.: The Department of Energy issued [new rules](#) giving itself the authority to abandon storage tanks with more than 100 million gallons of high-level radioactive waste at sites in South Carolina, Idaho and the state of Washington.

Under the law, this most toxic waste must be disposed of in deep, geologic formations so it won't endanger public health; the Trump administration is trying to avoid that important requirement.

The new rules allow DOE to walk away from long-lived high-level nuclear waste at the Hanford nuclear site, which contains two-thirds of the nation's inventory of such waste. Under the new rules, DOE is not required to remove or treat the waste if it so chooses. The rule paves the way for DOE to abandon untreated high-level waste in over 170 underground nuclear waste tanks, as it plans to do when it issued a proposal in 2018 to abandon 70,000 gallons of waste from the C Farms at Hanford.

On May 28, 2019, Washington State's Ecology Director warned the DOE that failing to meet cleanup deadlines would result in court actions.

Organizations around the nuclear complex issued strong statement opposing the imposition of the new rules.

The following is a comment from Tom Carpenter, executive director of Hanford Challenge:

"The Hanford nuclear site is riddled with earthquake faults, surrounded by active volcanoes, and has a major river system flowing through it and is not suitable for the storage of wastes that are toxic for millennia. DOE needs to comply with, not defy the law in order to protect current and future generations."

“We will not tolerate shortcuts to the cleanup in order to save money, while sacrificing health and safety.”

The following is a statement from Geoff Fettus, a senior attorney at Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC):

“The Trump administration is moving to fundamentally alter more than 50 years of national consensus on how the most toxic and radioactive waste in the world is managed and ultimately disposed of. No matter what they call it, this waste needs a permanent, well-protected disposal option to guard it for generations to come.

“Pretending this waste is not dangerous is irresponsible and outrageous.”

The following is a comment from Beatrice Brailsford, the nuclear program director at the Snake River Alliance in Idaho:

“Protecting people and the environment from nuclear hazards is a key Department of Energy responsibility. DOE: Do your job!”

The following is a comment from Tom Clements, director of Savannah River Site Watch:

“The massive containers of glassified high-level nuclear waste at Savannah River Site must be disposed of as required by law -- in a properly licensed geologic disposal site and not via shallow burial in low-level nuclear waste facilities in Utah or Texas.

“The Energy Department’s questionable rewriting of the regulations is simply a cost-cutting measure designed to get thousands of high-level waste containers dumped off site; they must continue to be safely stored at Savannah River until a geologic repository is available.”

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