



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

**Richland Operations
Office**

DOE News Release

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**For Immediate Release:
December 31, 2014**

DOE Richland Operations Office and its contractors look back at 2014 cleanup progress

RICHLAND, Wash. – Workers with the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Richland Operations Office and its contractors made significant progress this year in the cleanup of the Hanford Site that helped protect employees, the public, the environment, and the Columbia River, which runs through the Hanford Site in southeast Washington state.

Active cleanup has been completed on 479 square miles of the 586-square-mile Hanford Site. Tremendous progress has been made along the Columbia River, where nuclear reactors and uranium fuel fabrication and research facilities once operated. Eighty percent of the cleanup along the river has been completed to date. Work to prepare the site’s Plutonium Finishing Plant – formerly Hanford’s main plutonium production facility and today, considered the most hazardous facility on the site – for demolition is in its final, most challenging stages. More than 11 billion gallons of groundwater have been treated across the site to reduce areas of contamination and the concentration of contaminants in the groundwater.

The DOE Richland Operations Office and its contractors completed the following major cleanup activities in 2014.

- Moved the 1,082-ton core of a [nuclear test reactor](#) and a 1,153-ton [vault](#) that once held waste tanks from an area of the site where workers fabricated more than 20 million pieces of uranium fuel for reactors and operated research facilities. More than 200 facilities have been cleaned out and torn down in the former fuel fabrication and testing area known as the 300 Area. Only a former research facility with very high levels of contamination under the 324 building awaits cleanup there today.
- Reached [16 million tons of cleanup debris and contaminated soil disposed](#) of in the site’s permitted landfill for low-level radioactive waste, known as the Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility. More than 15 million tons of the waste came from areas near the Columbia River since cleanup began, from demolition and cleanup of hundreds of contaminated buildings and sites where solid waste was buried or soil was contaminated.
- Finished removing the [largest source of groundwater contamination](#) along the Columbia River, with the removal of approximately 1 billion cubic yards of soil near two of Hanford’s former nuclear reactors, removing a large source of the contaminant chromium.

- Began final cleanup of one of the [most challenging rooms](#) in the Plutonium Finishing Plant. Removed [eight support facilities](#) around the plant's main building to make room for heavy equipment to operate in the next two years during demolition of the plant.
- Exceeded annual goals for [removing contamination from groundwater](#) across the Hanford Site ahead of schedule and pumped a record volume of water through treatment facilities to remove contamination, with more than 130 tons of contaminants removed since treatment began in the mid-1990s.

Much work assigned to the DOE Richland Operations Office remains to be completed in the coming decades. Nearly 2,000 capsules of highly radioactive cesium and strontium need to be removed from water-filled storage basins and placed in dry storage. Approximately 37 cubic yards of radioactive sludge in stainless steel containers must be removed from a water-filled basin near the Columbia River. Hundreds of former production facilities, including five former chemical reprocessing facilities, must still be addressed, along with buried waste and contaminated soil in the central part of the site. Decades of treatment will be required to reduce contamination in groundwater across the site to levels considered safe.

Media note: B-roll video footage of the cleanup activities completed in the last year is available on the Hanford Site's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/hanfordsite).

- Cleanup in the 300 Area: [Moving the test reactor](#); [Moving the vault](#)
- Removing largest source of groundwater contamination: [Motherlode of chromium](#)
- Cleanup at the Plutonium Finishing Plant: [Most challenging room](#); [Demolition](#)
- Removing contamination from groundwater: [Boosting treatment](#)

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The Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) manages the Hanford Site near Richland, Washington. Along with the DOE Office of River Protection (ORP), DOE-RL is responsible for the federal government's cleanup of the legacy of more than 40 years of plutonium production at Hanford for the nation's defense. Except for the tank waste mission managed by ORP, DOE-RL is responsible for cleanup of all remaining Hanford waste streams and is currently focused on cleaning out and demolishing the high-hazard Plutonium Finishing Plant, excavating and disposing of contaminated soil and solid 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 4,300 personnel. Visit www.hanford.gov.