



News Release

Washington Department of Ecology news
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Ecology reissues draft Hanford permit for public comment

RICHLAND – The Department of Ecology today released its draft Hanford Facility Dangerous Waste Permit for public comment. Ecology is the state regulator at Hanford, overseeing the cleanup efforts of the U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) and its contractors.

This permit is the state’s primary tool for regulating the treatment, storage and disposal of chemically hazardous and mixed radioactive and chemical waste left over from plutonium production during World War II and the Cold War.

Production ended at Hanford in 1988. However, during more than 40 years in operation, significant amounts of waste were created. In 1989, Hanford’s mission shifted to environmental cleanup and to waste management operations supporting this cleanup. From both a regulatory and technical standpoint, Hanford Site cleanup is one of the largest, most complex environmental projects in the United States.

This is the first reissue of the state’s full Hanford permit, which was first released in 1994. Its size reflects the complexity and enormity of Hanford. At over 16,000 pages, this permit is by far the state’s largest such regulatory document. The permit covers 37 separate units on the 586-square-mile Hanford Site, including the Waste Treatment Plant, which is being built to treat 56 million gallons of high-level waste from the 177 underground storage tanks.

“Ecology’s mission at Hanford is to protect the health of people and the environment from Hanford contamination,” said Jane Hedges, Ecology’s Nuclear Waste Program manager. “This permit is a key part of ensuring that Hanford cleanup is protective now and far into the future.”

The permit includes requirements for site inspections, spill notification and response, emergency management plans, and waste acceptance criteria. State law authorizes civil and criminal penalties for permit violations.

The comment period on the permit runs through Sept. 30, 2012. Ecology has scheduled a full-day public workshop and four public hearings to share information, answer questions and receive comments about the permit:

Public workshop

- May 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Richland (Ecology office)

Public hearings

- May 15 at 7 p.m., Seattle (University Heights Center)
- May 16 at 7 p.m., Portland (Jantzen Beach Red Lion Hotel)
- June 5 at 6:30 p.m., Spokane (City Council Chambers)
- June 6 at 6:30 p.m., Richland (Public Library)

One part of Ecology's Hanford permit that is not yet available for public comment is that dealing with the single-shell tanks. This draft permit is expected to be released for comment at the end of June, with the comment period running through Sept. 30, 2012. The single-shell tanks unit will be incorporated into the full permit.

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Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program website: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp/

Ecology's permit website: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/nwp/permitting/hdwp/index.html

Frequently Asked Questions document: www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0805007.pdf

Ecology's website: www.ecy.wa.gov

Ecology's social media: www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html

Broadcast version

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