



PRESS RELEASE

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Hanford Single-Shell Tank (T-111) Leaking Radioactive Waste

**"Let me be clear. Washington State has a zero tolerance policy on radioactive leaks."
-Governor Jay Inslee**

On February 15th, 2013, the United States Department of Energy, Office of River Protection confirmed a decrease of liquid in Hanford single-shell tank T-111. The Department of Energy (DOE) [reported](#) that T-111 is leaking at a rate of 150-300 gallons of radioactive liquid waste per year. The exact cause of the leak has not yet been determined.

Washington Governor Jay Inslee held a press conference about the new leak and declared, "Let me be clear. Washington State has a zero tolerance policy on radioactive leaks."

Although this current leak may appear to be small in comparison to the overall legacy of environmental contamination at Hanford, nuclear tank waste is extremely toxic in small amounts.

Over one million gallons of radioactive waste has already leaked into the ground at Hanford. The T-111 tank is one of the 177 underground nuclear waste tanks containing an estimated 56 million gallons of high-level nuclear waste. Sixty-seven Hanford tanks have leaked over one million gallons into the soil, which is right next to the Columbia River.

This latest leak of a Hanford single-shell tank comes on top of the recent double-shell tank leak from [AY-102](#). Under Washington law, when a tank has a confirmed leak, it "must be removed from service immediately," and the owner must "within twenty-four hours after detection of the leak . . . remove as much of the waste as is necessary to prevent further release of dangerous waste to the environment..." ([WAC 173-303-640](#)).

The State of Washington entered into a cleanup agreement with the Department of Energy pushing the deadline for emptying high-level waste tanks to 2052. The assumption has always been that the double-shell tanks would continue to hold their wastes throughout that time frame. The status of the AY-102 and now this news of T-111 challenge that assumption.

There is very limited space available to store waste from confirmed leaking tanks, which highlights the need for new double-shell tank construction at Hanford.

Executive Director of Hanford Challenge, Tom Carpenter, put the issue in perspective:

“Hanford is in a tough place. The tanks are failing left and right, and the facility that is supposed to treat this waste, the Waste Treatment Plant, is plagued with mismanagement and technical problems. It won’t be ready anytime soon. The need for the DOE to build new tanks is clear.”

Hanford Challenge calls upon Governor Inslee to order the Department of Ecology to use its enforcement powers to require the immediate pumping of Tank T-111 to prevent further leaks to the environment.

Carpenter stated, “The State of Washington should not wait for the U.S. Department of Energy to take months to confirm that the tank waste has contaminated the environment, but instead begin emptying the tank immediately.”

Hanford Challenge praises Governor Jay Inslee for his “zero tolerance policy on radioactive leaks” at Hanford. The history of tank leaks at Hanford, as well as this latest leak, illustrates the urgency to begin construction of new tanks and the importance of an independent assessment of the waste treatment plant.

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