



## NEWS FROM BEYOND NUCLEAR

For immediate release

Contact: Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Watchdog, Beyond Nuclear, [240-462-3216](tel:240-462-3216);  
Paul Gunter, Director, Reactor Oversight Project, Beyond Nuclear [301-523-0201](tel:301-523-0201)

### **Another radioactive waste accident, this time at Hanford, shows nuclear dump sites are not under control**

TAKOMA PARK, MD, May 9, 2017 -- A tunnel at the Hanford Nuclear Site in Washington State collapsed today on top of railcars stored there that contain “mixed” radioactive waste, an accident that local watchdog group, Hanford Challenge, describes as a “crisis.”

The tunnel is located next to the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility, also known as PUREX, and contains substances classified as “dangerous waste.” The collapse prompted an initial evacuation of workers in the area that then spread to a “take cover” order for the entire site.

The already embattled Hanford site was originally part of the Manhattan Project, and a major supplier of military plutonium. It houses 177 storage tanks containing liquid radioactive sludges, some of which have been leaking radioactive effluent that could eventually threaten the Columbia River. Cleanup at the site did not begin until 1989. The Hanford tunnel collapse may have been caused by soil subsidence due to vibrations from nearby road works.

"The current unfolding crisis at Hanford, the bursting barrel at Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico in 2014, and the exploding radioactive waste dump in Beatty, Nevada in 2015, show that radioactive waste management is out of control," said Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Watchdog at Beyond Nuclear.

"That's why the Yucca Mountain dump in Nevada, the Canadian dump targeted at the Great Lakes shore, and the parking lot dumps in Texas and New Mexico must be blocked, to prevent future disasters," Kamps added.

WIPP, a radioactive waste repository mainly for military waste and situated near Carlsbad, NM, suffered an accident on February 14, 2014. The explosion there released radioactivity that exposed workers who were stationed above ground at the time and forced an almost three-year shutdown of the site. The disaster cost \$2 billion and counting. As at Hanford, a relatively minor event — the use of the wrong kitty litter for cleanup — was blamed for the WIPP accident, prompting serious questions about competence and safeguards at such critically dangerous sites.

A leak in a massive nuclear waste storage tank at Hanford in April 2016 was described as "catastrophic" by a former tank farm worker there, even as the U.S. Department of Energy tried to downplay the problem.

Most commercial radioactive waste is currently stored at reactor sites around the country. However, military radioactive waste has continued to pose an on-going storage nightmare. Beyond Nuclear advocates for commercial reactor waste to be stored on-site but in facilities known as Hardened On-Site Storage, or HOSS, and not in the risky pools and inadequate waste casks, as is the current practice.

-30-

*Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic. The Beyond Nuclear team works with diverse partners and allies to provide the public, government officials, and the media with the critical information necessary to move humanity toward a world beyond nuclear. Beyond Nuclear: 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 400, Takoma Park, MD 20912. [Info@beyondnuclear.org](mailto:Info@beyondnuclear.org). [www.beyondnuclear.org](http://www.beyondnuclear.org).*