

Energy and Commerce Committee Seeks Probe of Hanford Nuclear Waste Site

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Washington, D.C. — Five key Members of Congress today asked the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to assess the costs from repeated nuclear and worker safety stand downs at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford Waste Treatment Plant and Tank Farms in southeastern Washington State.

In a bipartisan letter, Members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce asked the GAO to estimate the costs of halting work at Hanford and determine whether those costs have been borne by DOE contractors or taxpayers. The letter also asks GAO to assess whether these costs could have been avoided with more effective nuclear and worker safety oversight and better DOE management of its contractors.

Currently, more than 55 million gallons of chemical, hazardous, and radioactive waste is stored at the Hanford Nuclear Waste Site. As part of its cleanup efforts, the Department of Energy (DOE) has begun building new waste treatment facilities and transferring hazardous materials to double-shell underground storage tanks. DOE and its contractors are charged with maintaining adequate health and safety standards for the workers on this project.

In reaction to some major incidents or when major design weaknesses were identified, DOE management shut down operations or construction in order to address systemic safety problems.

The letter was signed by Reps. John D. Dingell (D-MI) and Joe Barton (R-TX), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, along with Reps. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and John Shimkus (R-IL), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA), a member of the Committee.

[Read the Letter](#)

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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