

Nuclear waste tank in Washington state may be leaking

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**
Associated Press

RICHLAND, Wash. — An underground nuclear waste storage tank in Washington state that dates to World War II appears to be leaking contaminated liquid into the ground, the U.S. Department of Energy said on Thursday, April 29.

It's the second tank believed to be leaking waste left from the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The first was discovered in 2013. Many more of the 149 single-walled storage tanks at the site are suspected of leaking.

Tank B-109, the latest suspected of leaking, holds 123,000 gallons of radioactive waste. The giant tank was constructed during the Manhattan Project that built the first atomic bombs and received waste from Hanford operations from 1946 to 1976.

The Hanford site near Richland in the southeastern part of the state produced about two-thirds of the plutonium for the nation's nuclear arsenal, including the bomb dropped in 1945 on Nagasaki, Japan, and now is the most contaminated radioactive waste site in the nation.



A sign at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation is posted near Richland, Wash. Officials say an underground nuclear waste storage tank that dates to World War II appears to be leaking contaminated liquid into the ground. The U.S. Department of Energy said Thursday, April 29, 2021, that Tank B-109 holds 123,000 gallons of radioactive waste left from the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

A multibillion-dollar environmental cleanup has been underway for decades at the sprawling Hanford site.

The Washington state Department of Ecology

and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency were notified on April 29 that the tank was likely leaking.

"There is no increased health or safety risk to the

Hanford workforce or the public," said Geoff Tyree, a spokesman for the Energy Department. "Contamination in this area is not new and mitigation actions have

been in place for decades to protect workers, the public and the environment."

The tank had been previously emptied of pumpable liquids, leaving a small

amount of liquid waste inside, the agency said. Systems in the area capture and remove contaminants that reach the groundwater and ensure the protection of the Columbia River, the agency said.

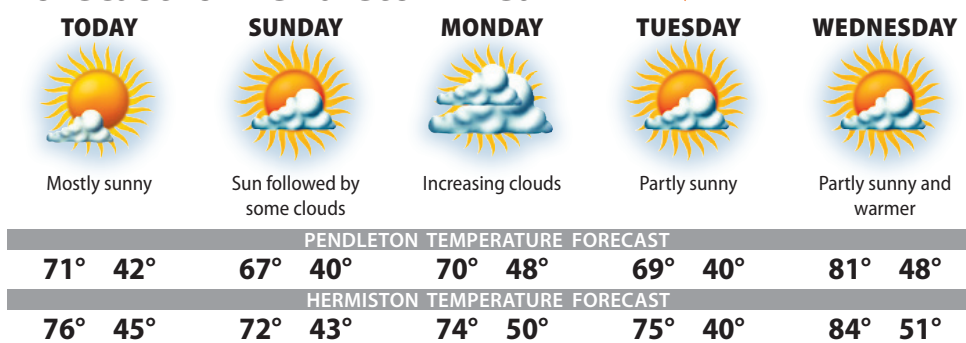
The leak from Tank B-109 was first suspected in March 2019, when there appeared to be a small drop in the level of its liquid waste. Monthly checks showed the level stable until July 2020, when another drop was detected, and the Department of Energy launched an investigation.

The state Department of Ecology said the tank is leaking about 3.5 gallons per day. "It's a serious matter whenever a Hanford tank leaks its radioactive and dangerous chemical waste," Ecology Director Laura Watson said, adding, "this highlights the critical need for resources to address Hanford's aging tanks, which will continue to fail and leak over time."

The Seattle-based watchdog group Heart of America Northwest said the leak releases radioactive waste that is dangerous for hundreds to thousands of years.

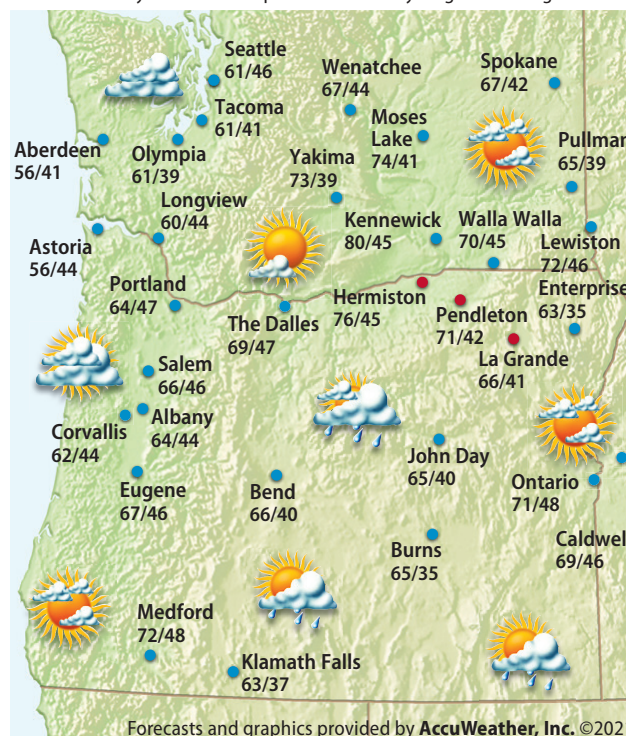
"There's no such thing as a small leak from a high-level nuclear waste tank," director Gerry Pollet said.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	76°	53°	
Normals	67°	42°	
Records	89° (1931)	27° (2019)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.22"		
Normal month to date	1.15"		
Year to date	3.56"		
Last year to date	5.16"		
Normal year to date	5.11"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	77°	55°	
Normals	69°	42°	
Records	89° (1957)	29° (2019)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.08"		
Normal month to date	0.88"		
Year to date	1.28"		
Last year to date	0.51"		
Normal year to date	3.99"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Boardman	WSW 7-14	WSW 6-12	
Pendleton	W 8-16	WNW 7-14	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	5:43 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	8:02 p.m.		
Moonrise today	12:59 a.m.		
Moonset today	9:23 a.m.		
Last	New	First	Full
May 3	May 11	May 19	May 26

COVID-19 outbreak leads to closure of Wallowa High School

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa High School closed for the next two weeks, effective Thursday, April 29, after several COVID-19 cases were confirmed at the school, Superintendent Tammy Jones said in a post to the district's Facebook page.

According to the post, six individuals have tested positive for COVID-19 — two on Wednesday, April 28, and four other positive tests earlier in the week. In a social media post on Tuesday, April 27, that first outlined the details of the outbreak, the district said it did not plan to close.

That plan changed on April 29.

"We are working closely

with our local and state health authority to respond to this news and protect the health of our community," Jones wrote in the April 29 post. "We are rapidly putting the contact tracing logs together and providing them to local health officials for contact tracing. Given the timing and the numbers of contacts that local health officials will need to contact, we are immediately closing our high school."

Students in grades six through 12 were moved to distance learning starting April 29 and will remain there through May 11. A local health official will contact parents who have a student who is required to quarantine, Jones said in the post.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade will remain on campus, Jones said.

The Facebook post on April 27 linked the outbreak to a community prom, which the post said was not a school-sponsored activity.

"Many Wallowa County students attended this event, along with community chaperones," the post stated. "(April 27) we learned that a number of individuals attending the prom have tested positive for COVID-19."

Jones on April 29 confirmed the six reported cases are students.

She added that any athletes will be able to compete during the move to distance learning as long as they are not in quarantine.

IN BRIEF

Bill to kill up to 90% of Idaho wolves heads to governor

BOISE, Idaho — The Idaho House on Tuesday, April 27, approved legislation allowing the state to hire private contractors and expand methods to kill wolves roaming Idaho — a measure that could cut the wolf population by 90%.

Lawmakers voted 58-11 to send the agriculture industry-backed bill to Republican Gov. Brad Little. The fast-tracked bill that allows the use of night-vision equipment to kill wolves as well as hunting from snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, among other measures, passed the Senate last week.

Backers said changes to Idaho law could help reduce the wolf population from about 1,500 to 150, alleviating wolf attacks on cattle, sheep and wildlife.

"We have areas of the state where the wolves are having a real detrimental impact on our wildlife," said House Majority Leader Mike Moyle, one of the bill's sponsors. "They are hurting the herds, elk and deer. This allows the Wolf (Depredation) Control Board and others to control them, also, which we have not done in the past."

Cattle and sheep ranchers say wolves have cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars by killing animals or harassing them, causing

them to lose weight, making them less valuable when they are sold.

Walla Walla man takes plea deal in porch pirate case

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — A reported porch pirate pleaded guilty to possession of stolen mail in connection to a string of hijacked packages in December 2020.

Daniel A. Rhoads, 31, appeared in Walla Walla County Superior Court on Friday, April 23, to enter his plea of guilty.

Rhoads' amended charges dismissed one theft charge related to the incident. Several other crimes investigated by Walla Walla police at the time of his arrest were not listed in court.

Rhoads admitted in court to being caught on Dec. 30, 2020, with mail belonging to at least three other people or at least 10 packages that weren't addressed to him, which is enough to charge the Class C felony of stolen mail possession.

Rhoads was sentenced by Judge Brandon L. Johnson to 30 days in jail, \$600 in fees and fines and other restitution to victims. Rhoads was given credit for one day already served in jail and had the other 29 days converted to community service.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin and Associated Press

CORRECTIONS: The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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