

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's Superfund Cleanup



Tri-Valley CAREs

ABOUT US

Tri-Valley Community Against a Radioactive Environment (CAREs) is a Livermore-based non-profit founded in 1983 to monitor Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and the nuclear weapons complex it is a part of. Our mission includes achieving a comprehensive cleanup of leaking toxic and radioactive wastes at LLNL and preventing further contamination. Our program involves affected community members in Superfund cleanup decision-making.

ABOUT LIVERMORE LAB

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) was founded in 1952 to accelerate nuclear weapons development. It is part of the National Nuclear Security Administration, a division of the Department of Energy that oversees U.S. nuclear weapons development and maintains and upgrades the stockpile of nuclear warheads. 85% of LLNL's funding in the current fiscal year went to Nuclear Weapons Activities.

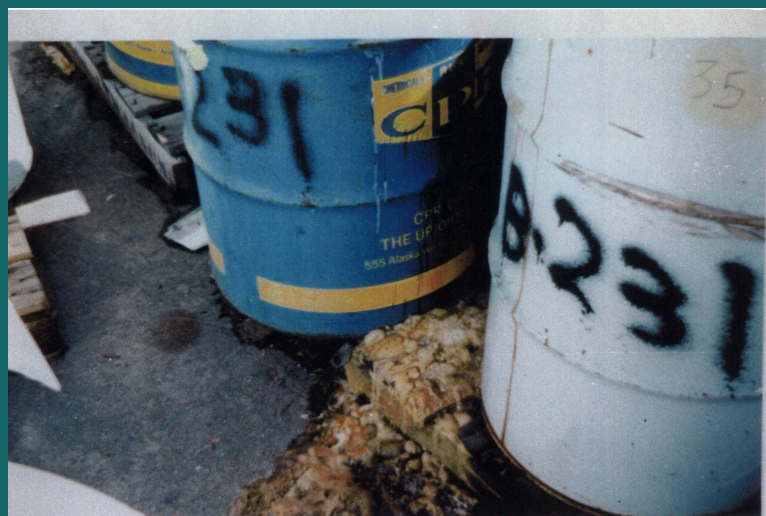
LLNL has a long history of environmental contamination, including release of radionuclides. Tri-Valley CAREs review of documents have shown that LLNL has released over one million curies of radiation into the environment. Radioactive Tritium gas has been released in substantial quantities over the years through normal operations and accidental releases, as well as releases of plutonium and other radionuclides.

SUPERFUND CLEANUP AT LIVERMORE LAB

LLNL Main Site in Livermore, California, was placed on the EPA's National Priorities List designating it as a "Superfund site" in 1987 due to soil and groundwater contamination by hazardous chemicals, including volatile organic compounds, tritium, and other pollutants from decades of research and testing activities.

Cleanup efforts have been ongoing for over 35 years and will continue for decades. The remediation process involves extensive groundwater treatment, soil vapor extraction, and monitoring to reduce contamination levels.

Leaking hazardous waste at Livermore Lab. Photo from State Health Department files.



HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES USED BY LIVERMORE LAB

LLNL conducts experiments with hazardous substances, including radionuclides, heavy metals and volatile organic compounds. Tritium releases are especially a concern because of Livermore's large agricultural sector; where it can enter the food supply.

In operating the facility over 60 years, LLNL has had accidental releases of hazardous substances, as well as extensive groundwater pollution that threatened the City of Livermore's water supply.

Studies have indicated that long-term exposure to low levels of radiation and toxic chemicals, particularly tritium and heavy metals, could increase risks of chronic illnesses, including certain cancers. While regulatory agencies have established exposure limits, uncertainties remain regarding the cumulative effects of prolonged contamination.

Despite ongoing cleanup efforts, major challenges remain, especially in preventing contaminants from spreading further in groundwater and soil. Keeping residents and works safe requires constant monitoring, effective soil and water treatment, and strong regulatory oversight, along with new remediation methods that can adapt to changing conditions and long-term risks.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

TVC meets regularly with the regulators and LLNL staff managing environmental cleanup at both sites. This provides us with advanced notice of opportunities for public input and involvement in cleanup decisions that are coming up, as well as providing an exchange where we can discuss technical and policy issues with the regulators.

TVC's role goes beyond advocacy; we actively analyze technical reports, provide detailed comments on remediation plans, and work to bridge the gap between community members and decision-makers. This approach allows us to push for stronger safeguards, advocate for community-friendly cleanup solutions, and ensure that the cleanup process remains a transparent and equitable effort.

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