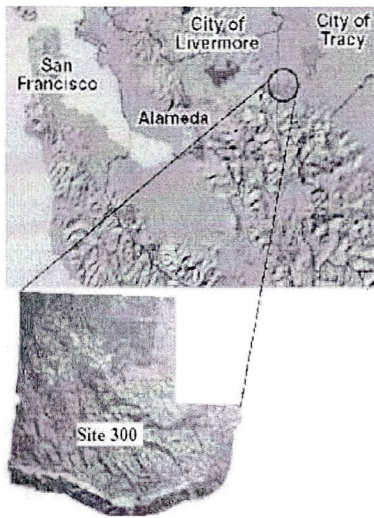


Site 300 Facts for the Community Meeting



Site 300 is Livermore Lab's high explosives testing facility. It encompasses 11 square miles along Corral Hollow Road, just west of downtown Tracy and east of Livermore. Over the years, Tracy has expanded and major residential development is proposed next to Site 300.

Since its founding in 1955, Site 300's mission has included open-air tests with

high explosives and other materials used in nuclear weapons and mock nuclear detonations. Current operations at Site 300 include contained detonations and open-air blasts along with explosive and hazardous waste burning and storage. Prevailing winds blow contamination into the Central Valley, and, particularly, toward Tracy.

A Superfund cleanup site:

Site 300 activities have polluted the soil and groundwater with a dangerous mixture of chemical and radioactive wastes including solvents, high explosive compounds, radioactive gases and metals, and numerous toxic materials. Moreover, an off-site groundwater plume contaminated with solvents has migrated off Site 300, traveling under the main road and the nearby Corral Hollow Creek.

Another contaminant of concern at Site 300 is Uranium-238, also known as depleted uranium. U-238 is a radioactive metal that is toxic to internal organs and poses increased risks of cancer and other negative impacts if inhaled or ingested. At Site 300, U-238 was often used in open-air tests and buried in huge unlined dumpsites. It contaminates soils and groundwater in multiple places. At one of the test locations, U-238 contamination in soil exceeds the EPA benchmark by many hundreds of times.

An additional radioactive material used in explosive tests at Site 300 is tritium, the radioactive hydrogen of the H-bomb. It was also buried in huge unlined trenches. Now there is a tritium groundwater plume that is about two miles long, and its radioactivity is still moving slowly underground. Tritium concentrations have been measured at up to 100 times the "maximum contaminant level" set by state and federal agencies. Exposure to tritium is associated with cancers, immune system deficiencies, miscarriages, and birth defects, among other bad outcomes.

Because of the magnitude of this contamination, Site 300 was named in 1990 as a federal Superfund site, meaning it is listed by the EPA as among the nation's most contami-

nated locations. Livermore Lab recently acknowledged that it is uncertain when cleanup at Site 300 will be completed, if ever. The Lab also estimates that its cleanup at Site 300 will cost \$1.8 billion.

Big decisions coming up:

The cleanup at Site 300 is entering a new and important phase. Cleanup is starting at one of the open-air firing tables that was often used to detonate U-238. The area is called Building 812, and it encompasses about 200 acres in the east-central part of Site 300. The firing table is located almost directly over an earthquake fault. The hillsides, canyons and groundwater in this area are contaminated, as is a nearby spring. In soil samples taken 5 feet below the firing table, total uranium has been measured at a concentration of 22,700 picocuries per gram. For comparison, a recent U.S. Dept. of Energy (DOE) report lists the proposed soil cleanup standard for uranium at Building 812 as 3.1 picocuries per gram.

Some of Tri-Valley CAREs' concerns:

There are serious, unresolved issues in the Building 812 cleanup. First, DOE contractors have issued a report that suggests that cleanup levels at Building 812 should be relaxed. This calls into question whether the cleanup will, in fact, be as comprehensive as possible. Second, the Lab plans to only clean up to "industrial" standards, which are more lax than residential standards. Third, Livermore Lab and DOE have not conducted enough outreach to the Tracy community, which will be directly affected if the Building 812 cleanup is not done properly.

Community involvement is needed:

Currently, the money for cleanup at Site 300 hovers at around 1% of the Livermore Lab's annual budget. The budget for addressing the pollution at Site 300 should be adequate, stable and assured over the many decades it will take to complete the job. The Lab must not renege on its obligation to clean up the mess it has made. It's time for the community to insist that the Lab prioritize, properly fund and complete the Site 300 cleanup.

A victory shows that winning is possible:

In 2006, Livermore Lab quietly set out to ramp up high explosive testing at Site 300. The Lab sought a new permit from the air pollution control district to increase the annual explosive limit at Site 300 eight-fold, from 1,000 pound blasts to 8,000 pound blasts. A Tracy business owner, Tri-Valley CAREs and colleagues at Earthjustice challenged the permit application. Our challenge resulted in an outpouring of public opposition to the permit. As a result, the air district demanded more information from the Lab. And, the outcome? Livermore Lab withdrew its permit application and closed several of the firing tables where the bigger, even more toxic, open-air tests would have occurred. *Community involvement made a difference!*