

TVC on Nuclear Weapons: Environment

By Anoushka Raj, Environmental Programs Manager

Good morning, everyone. My name is Anoushka Raj, and I am the Environmental Program Manager at Tri-Valley CAREs. Tanvi has talked about the expansion of Livermore Lab's nuclear weapons mission and some of the ways federal oversight is being weakened. I want to bring that closer to home and talk about what it means for the people who live and work around these sites, and for a cleanup that is already decades old.

Livermore Lab is not a remote nuclear facility. At the Main Site, homes and apartments come right up to the Lab. In fact, the Lab's own environmental analysis places one of the public receptors it uses to calculate radiation exposure only about 35 meters outside the eastern boundary. Its analysis projects more than eight million people living within 50 miles of the site.

And then there is Site 300, the Lab's high-explosives testing range near Tracy. Site 300 is often described in government documents as a "remote experimental test site." But today, the Tracy Hills development directly borders its eastern boundary. Carnegie State Park and its campground are just across Corral Hollow Road.

So when the government changes radiation standards or environmental protections, we need to remember who actually lives on the other side of those decisions.

One change we are watching very closely is to federal radiation protection standards. For decades, radiation protection has relied on a principle called ALARA: exposures should be kept "as low as reasonably achievable." DOE leadership has moved toward eliminating ALARA from its regulations and directives, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed doing the same in its regulations. For communities around nuclear facilities and for radiation workers, that is a very significant change. If an exposure can reasonably be reduced, we believe it should be reduced.

TVC went through publicly reported radiation releases from the Lab going back to the 1960s and added them together. They total more than one million curies of radiation released into the environment. The Main Site was placed on EPA's Superfund list in 1987. Site 300 was added in 1990. Decades later, both are still Superfund sites.

One of the biggest frustrations for us is that there is still no enforceable final date when the overall cleanup will be finished.

We see a similar problem with aging and contaminated buildings. The Lab's sitewide plan identified as many as 149 facilities for decontamination, decommissioning and demolition: 131 at the Main Site and 18 at Site 300.

And we recently learned that demolition is actually constrained by waste capacity. The Lab can only demolish a limited number of facilities at a time because it cannot process and dispose of all the resulting waste simultaneously.

Now compare that with what is being built. The same sitewide plan includes 75 new construction projects totaling approximately 3.3 million square feet. So millions of square feet of new facilities are being planned while old facilities wait for demolition because the waste system cannot handle everything at once.

And while Tanvi has already discussed the Lab's enormous overall budget, I want to add one number from the cleanup side. The FY2027 budget lists just \$1.955 million for Livermore's specific defense environmental cleanup account, about six-hundredths of one percent of the Lab's total requested budget.

The government knows how to set deadlines and find money when it wants something built. Communities deserve that same urgency when it comes to cleaning up the contamination left behind.

Site 300 provides another example of why community oversight matters.

Earlier this year, we urged the Lab to organize a community Superfund tour there so residents could see the cleanup areas and ask questions directly. Our tour had to be reduced because open-air blasting was taking place that day, meaning portions of the site could not be visited.

People were there specifically to learn about the environmental consequences of decades of activity at Site 300, and even their ability to see the cleanup had to accommodate the weapons-testing mission.

There is another community we cannot leave out: the people who have worked inside these facilities. More than 3,100 former Livermore Lab employees have filed federal claims for illnesses they believe resulted from exposure to radiation and toxic chemicals on the job.

And Livermore is only one part of this story. More than 140,000 former nuclear workers across the country have applied through the federal occupational illness compensation program: from Livermore, Los Alamos, Hanford, Savannah River, Oak Ridge and other sites.

Many of the protections workers have today exist precisely because previous generations were exposed before their risks were acknowledged or adequately controlled. That history should make us extremely wary of weakening those protections now.

So where do we go from here?

One major issue TVC is watching is Livermore Lab's hazardous-waste permitting. Its most recent renewal application was submitted in August 2025, but we have been told public participation is not expected until 2028. We are asking what happens during that gap and how the public will actually be involved.

When that process opens, we need Livermore and Tracy residents asking questions about waste storage and treatment, open burning, fires, inspections, compliance and what happens when something goes wrong.

And very soon, TVC will release a new Community Guide to the Livermore Lab Superfund cleanup, explaining in plain language what is contaminated, what is being done about it, what remains unresolved and how you can get involved.

So please stay connected with us. Look for the Community Guide and our permit and cleanup alerts. Come to our meetings, submit public comments, and ask difficult questions. We appreciate your continued support and participation in this work.

Thank you for coming out today.