

Funding cuts jeopardize cleanup of nuclear waste sites

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The Federal Government may need at least 20 years longer than previously planned — and an additional \$50 billion — to clean up radioactive and hazardous wastes at nuclear weapons sites, according to an article scheduled for the March 10 issue of Chemical & Engineering News, ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

The article, written by C&EN Senior Editor Jeff Johnson, cites a new U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) audit of its operations estimating that clean-up costs may reach \$305 billion at about 25 sites where nuclear weapons materials were manufactured.

That's more than \$50 billion above the Bush Administration's earlier estimate. The audit also indicates that it may take until 2062 to finish the cleanup job, over 20 years longer than originally scheduled.

Still, the clean-up budget proposed this year by the Bush Administration is \$5.5 billion, one of the lowest since the massive remediation effort began in the 1980s. The budget cuts may be particularly hard felt at large cleanup sites such as Washington State's Hanford Nuclear Site, the most contaminated nuclear site in the country, the article suggests. Some officials fear that the cuts could delay cleanup of Hanford and other sites indefinitely.

Link: pubs.acs.org/cen/government/86/8610gov2.html

Source: ACS

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