

Letter to the Editor – Tri-City Herald

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The historic definition of high-level radioactive waste (HLW) dates from 70 years ago when spent fuel was being reprocessed. DOE is now proposing to change the definition, allowing waste to be classified as HLW or non-HLW based on its actual radiological characteristics rather than its origin. Reclassification offers significant benefits for site cleanup making it safer, quicker, more effective, and less costly.

DOE's proposal is particularly appropriate and overdue for Hanford where a significant quantity of such waste has been managed as HLW regardless of its actual composition and level of hazard. This has created an unjust burden on the taxpayer and more importantly the workforce by prolonging Hanford cleanup and adding risks to those who manage the waste stored in deteriorating tanks and infrastructure.

The status quo is not serving us well as demonstrated by the recent enormous increase in the estimated time and cost to cleanup Hanford. Change is necessary. Our community needs to serve as an advocate in DOE's efforts to accurately classify this waste, so it receives the most appropriate, responsibly sound treatment, storage and disposal.

The Tri-Cities Local Business Association (TCLBA) is in full agreement with technical experts who support DOE's proposed changes.

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