



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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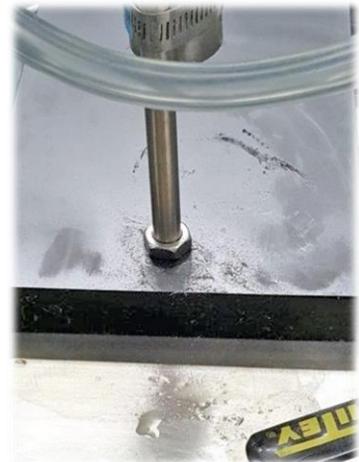
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### **Hanford Worker Blows Whistle on 222-S Labs** **Hanford Toxic Chemical Vapor Issue Goes Beyond Tank Farms**

Seattle, WA: Hanford Challenge released a [Complaint](#) filed on June 1, 2016 by Hanford Whistleblower David Lee, an Instrument Specialist at the 222-S Labs<sup>1</sup>, which is operated by Washington River Protection Solutions, Inc. (WRPS).

Mr. Lee was suspended and had his badge taken away after he called a Stop Work due to unsafe working conditions at a Hanford laboratory, including inadequate ventilation of the labs and inadequate handling of toxic oil from the lab equipment, resulting in potential vapor and dermal exposures to toxic waste without the proper protective equipment.

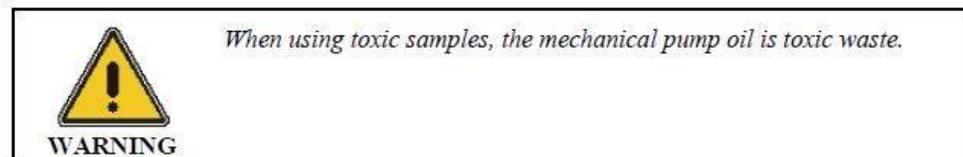
The lab equipment at 222-S Labs is currently being used to test samples taken from the headspace<sup>2</sup> of the high-level nuclear waste tanks at Hanford. These tanks contain many toxic chemicals, including dimethyl mercury, n-nitrosodimethylamine, ammonia, and literally thousands of other chemicals. These chemicals can cause cancer, liver damage, lung damage, eye and skin irritation, and even brain damage if breathed in sufficient concentrations.



*Oil on counter in Lab*

When Mr. Lee returned to work, he discovered that his Stop Work had been bypassed and the oil in the lab equipment had been changed and disposed of in violation of his Stop Work. Mr. Lee has continued to experience retaliation since returning to work, including being assigned to housekeeping work where he cleaned closets (something he had never been assigned to do), being labeled a “troublemaker” in front of

his coworkers, and being told that he should request a transfer to a different job outside of the Lab.



*Warning from Lab Equipment Manual*

<sup>1</sup> For more on 222-S Labs, see Complaint of David Lee, paragraphs 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> The headspace is the portion of the tank from the top level of the waste to the ceiling of the tank – where gases and vapors accumulate.

Nikolas F. Peterson, Staff Attorney at Hanford Challenge stated, “If Hanford continues to punish workers who raise concerns, then the message to the workforce is clear—look the other way and do not say anything. This is a recipe for disaster at a nuclear cleanup facility. In bringing this suit, Hanford Challenge is making sure that Dave, and other Hanford workers like Dave, have a voice.” Peterson concluded, “Let me be clear. Hanford Challenge will not rest until each and every Hanford worker is empowered to raise health, safety, and environmental concerns without fear of retaliation.”

This complaint comes on the heels of a [report](#) by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) slamming the Department of Energy on its failure to protect and encourage the reporting of critical nuclear and environmental safety issues at nuclear facilities. At a [Press Conference](#) for the GAO report, Senator Ron Wyden-OR said, “It is clear that Department of Energy contractors are going to go to amazing lengths to send a signal to their employees that when you blow the whistle, it is going to be the end of your career.” Sen. Wyden continued, “In my view the Department [of Energy] is guilty of willful negligence at best, and at worst, actively aiding in the violation of whistleblower rights.”

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