

Note 14. Environmental and Disposal Liabilities

(In billions of dollars)	2020	2019
Department of Energy.....	512.3	505.3
Department of Defense.....	75.0	76.1
All other entities	15.4	14.0
Total environmental and disposal liabilities	<u>602.7</u>	<u>595.4</u>

During World War II and the Cold War, DOE (or predecessor entities) developed a massive industrial complex to research, produce, and test nuclear weapons. This included nuclear reactors, chemical-processing buildings, metal machining plants, laboratories, and maintenance facilities.

At all sites where these activities took place, some environmental contamination occurred. This contamination was caused by the production, storage, and use of radioactive materials and hazardous chemicals, which resulted in contamination of soil, surface water, and groundwater. The environmental legacy of nuclear weapons production also includes thousands of contaminated buildings and large volumes of waste and special nuclear materials requiring treatment, stabilization, and disposal.

Estimated cleanup costs at sites for which there are no current feasible remediation approaches are excluded from the estimates, although applicable stewardship and monitoring costs for these sites are included. DOE has not been required through regulation to establish remediation activities for these sites.

Estimating DOE's environmental cleanup liability requires making assumptions about future activities and is inherently uncertain. The future course of DOE's environmental cleanup and disposal will depend on a number of fundamental technical and policy choices, many of which have not been made. Some sites and facilities could be restored to a condition suitable for any desirable use or could be restored to a point where they pose no near-term health risks to the surrounding communities. Achieving the former condition of the sites and facilities would have a higher cost but these costs may be warranted in some cases or may be legally required. The environmental and disposal liability estimates include contingency estimates intended to account for the uncertainties associated with the technical cleanup scope of the program. Congressional appropriations at lower-than anticipated levels or lack of Congressional approval, unplanned delays in project completions including potential delays due to COVID-19, unforeseen technical issues, obtaining regulatory approval, among other things, could cause increases in life-cycle costs.

DOE's environmental and disposal liabilities also include the estimated cleanup and post-closure responsibilities, including surveillance and monitoring activities, soil and groundwater remediation, and disposition of excess material for sites. DOE is responsible for the post-closure activities at many of the closure sites as well as other sites. The costs for these post-closure activities are estimated for a period of 75 years after the balance sheet date, i.e., through 2095 in FY 2020 and through 2094 in FY 2019. While some post-cleanup monitoring and other long-term stewardship activities post-2095 are included in the liability, there are others DOE expects to continue beyond 2095 for which the costs cannot reasonably be estimated.

A portion of DOE's environmental and disposal liabilities at various field sites includes anticipated costs for facilities managed by DOE's ongoing program operations, which will ultimately require stabilization, deactivation, and decommissioning. The estimate is largely based upon a cost-estimating model. Site specific estimates are used in lieu of the cost-estimating model, when available. Cost estimates for ongoing program facilities are updated each year. For facilities newly contaminated since FY 1997, cleanup costs allocated to future periods and not included in environmental and disposal liabilities amounted to \$0.9 billion for both FYs 2020 and 2019. Please refer to the financial statements of DOE for additional information regarding DOE's environmental and disposal liabilities.

DOD must restore active installations, installations affected by base realignment and closure, and other areas formerly used as DOD sites. DOD also bears responsibility for disposal of chemical weapons and environmental costs associated with the disposal of weapons systems (primarily nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines).

DOD follows the *Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act*, CERCLA, RCRA and other applicable federal or state laws to clean up contamination. The CERCLA and RCRA require DOD to clean up contamination in coordination with regulatory entities, current owners of property damaged by DOD, and third parties that have a partial responsibility for the environmental restoration. Failure to comply with agreements and legal mandates puts the DOD at risk of incurring fines and penalties.

DOD uses engineering estimates and independently validated models to estimate environmental costs. The engineering estimates are based upon extensive data obtained during the remedial investigation/feasibility phase of the environmental project.

For general PP&E placed into service after September 30, 1997, DOD expenses associated environmental costs systematically over the life of the asset using two methods: physical capacity for operating landfills and life expectancy in years for all other assets. DOD expenses the full cost to clean up contamination for stewardship PP&E at the time the asset is placed into service. DOD has expensed the costs for cleanup associated with general PP&E placed into service before October 1, 1997, except for costs intended to be recovered through user charges; for those costs, DOD has expensed cleanup costs associated with that portion of the asset life that has passed since it was placed into service. DOD systematically recognizes the remaining cost over the remaining life of the asset. The unrecognized portion of the estimated total cleanup costs associated with disposal of general PP&E was \$4.3 billion for both FYs 2020 and 2019.

DOD is responsible for environmental restoration and corrective action for buried chemical munitions and agents; however, a reasonable estimate is indeterminable because the extent of the buried chemical munitions and agents is unknown. DOD is also unable to provide a complete estimate for the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program. DOD has ongoing studies and will update its estimate as additional liabilities are identified. DOD has the potential to incur costs for restoration initiatives in conjunction with returning overseas DOD facilities to host nations. DOD continues its efforts to reasonably estimate required restoration costs.

Environmental liabilities are subject to changes in laws and regulations, agreements with regulatory agencies, and advances in technology. DOD is unaware of pending changes affecting its estimated cleanup costs. DOD revised estimates resulting from previously unknown contaminants, re-estimation based on different assumptions, and other changes in project scope.

Please refer to the financial statements of DOD for additional information regarding DOD's environmental and disposal liabilities, including cleanup costs.