



# Oregon

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**To:** House Committee on Health Care  
Representative Rachel Prusak, Chair  
Representative Cedric Hayden, Vice-Chair  
Representative Andrea Salinas, Vice-Chair  
Committee Members

**From:** Maxwell Woods  
Assistant Director for Nuclear Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
Oregon Department of Energy

**Date:** February 17, 2021

**Re:** Oregon Health Authority – Radiation Protection Services and HB 2075

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The Oregon Department of Energy, Nuclear Safety and Emergency Preparedness division, has a longstanding relationship with Radiation Protection Services. Our partnership with RPS forms the core of Oregon state government's radiation and nuclear safety program, and our two agencies work together on a number of important issues that protect public health, safety, and the environment. The Oregon Department of Energy supports efforts to ensure that the RPS division has long-term stability and maintains its ability to retain a highly-qualified technical staff. The services that RPS provides demand a staff with a level of education and professional experience that is not easily replaced.

ODOE and RPS partner on multiple specific programs and initiatives that protect Oregonians and our environment. These programs include:

- RPS is a key partner in the ODOE nuclear safety and radiological emergency preparedness program. ODOE has primary responsibilities for responding to an emergency at the Hanford nuclear site and the Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant, both located along the Columbia River in Richland, Washington, about 35 miles north of Umatilla County. A coordinated response to an emergency at either of these sites would involve key functions by RPS. RPS actively participates in ODOE-led emergency training exercises and maintains 24/7 radiological incident response readiness.

- RPS supports the ODOE-led radioactive material transportation safety program. RPS is a recipient of federal grant funds from ODOE that allow RPS to implement emergency first responder training along the primary radioactive material transportation routes.
- RPS supports the state's efforts to safely manage the use, storage, transportation, and disposal of radioactive materials within the state. RPS issues licenses to generators and users of these types of materials and works with licensees to ensure continued compliance. Oregon statutes and rules prohibit the disposal of radioactive wastes within the state and give ODOE authority to define "radioactive waste" and enforce violations of the disposal restriction. In our capacity as radioactive waste disposal regulators, ODOE frequently works with RPS to ascertain details about suspected wastes, interpret the results of radiological assessments, and facilitate safe and legal disposal.
- When a radioactive source is detected at the entrance to a transfer station or landfill, RPS is commonly the first responder, bringing the equipment, expertise, and specific knowledge required to guide the safe isolation and eventual disposal of these materials. This often includes helping parties work with brokers to transfer prohibited wastes out of state for disposal.
- ODOE and RPS recently collaborated on the development of a post-wildfire radiological survey plan recommendation at the request of the Department of Environmental Quality. The purpose of the plan was to facilitate the safe recovery of properties in the wildfire-affected areas of the state, and RPS brought specific expertise in radiological survey equipment capabilities and procedures. Similar planning may be useful in future disaster recovery efforts.

RPS provides an invaluable service as the state's dedicated, knowledgeable, on-the-ground professionals in radiation safety. We are grateful for the role RPS performs, and we support efforts to ensure RPS maintains its staffing and emergency response capabilities as part of Oregon's comprehensive radiation and nuclear safety functions.