

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-107173](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Effective management of DOE's contaminated excess facilities could reduce the U.S. government's environmental liability, which is on GAO's High Risk List. Deactivating and decommissioning such facilities is crucial for reducing risks and costs as the condition of facilities worsens over time. Since 2016, DOE has been required by statute to regularly plan for deactivating and decommissioning contaminated excess facilities.

Senate Report 118-58 includes a provision for GAO to evaluate DOE's efforts to develop a plan for deactivating and decommissioning contaminated excess facilities, which is due March 2025 and every 4 years afterward. GAO examined (1) DOE's approach to deactivating and decommissioning NNSA's contaminated excess facilities and (2) the extent to which DOE's planning efforts addressed statutory requirements and key practices. GAO analyzed DOE's fiscal year 2023 data on contaminated excess facilities, assessed DOE's 2022 deactivation and decommissioning plan, and interviewed NNSA and EM officials, including officials at seven sites with NNSA contaminated excess facilities.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that DOE ensure that its 2025 deactivation and decommissioning plan address all statutorily required elements and its 2025 disposition planning efforts fully incorporate GAO's key practices for planning for results of federal efforts. DOE concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-24-107173](#). For more information, contact Nathan Anderson at (202) 512-3841 or [andersonn@gao.gov](mailto:andersonn@gao.gov).

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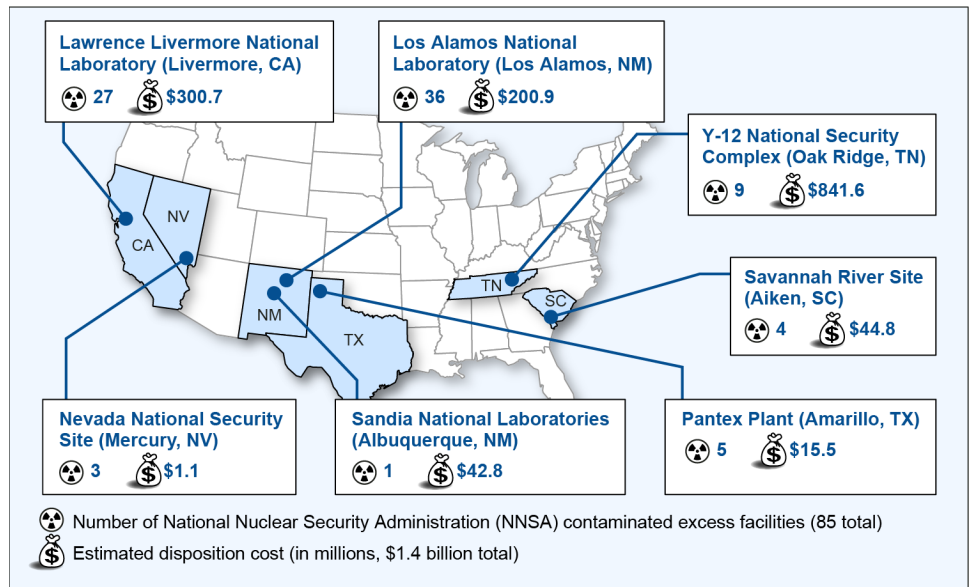
# CONTAMINATED EXCESS FACILITIES

## Use of Key Practices Would Strengthen DOE's Disposition Planning Efforts

### What GAO Found

As of fiscal year 2023, the Department of Energy (DOE) estimated that it would cost \$1.4 billion to deactivate and decommission 85 contaminated excess facilities owned by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and that are no longer needed to support DOE's missions. NNSA prioritizes disposition activities to align with its mission to maintain and modernize infrastructure for the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. NNSA has the authority to deactivate and decommission certain contaminated excess facilities but needs the Office of Environmental Management (EM) to carry out this work on some of the more complex and costly facilities. EM can do so once it has funding and contracting mechanisms in place and the facilities meet certain criteria.

### NNSA Contaminated Excess Facilities at Seven Sites, as of Fiscal Year 2023



Sources: GAO analysis of Department of Energy (DOE) data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-24-107173

DOE officials said that the deactivation and decommissioning plan due in March 2025 would be similar to previous iterations. However, GAO found that DOE's most recent plan, issued in 2022, did not include four of the six statutorily required elements or fully incorporate the three key practices for planning for results of federal efforts. Addressing all statutorily required elements, such as by including a list of contaminated excess facilities prioritized based on the potential to reduce risk and maximize cost savings, may better provide Congress with a clearer picture of how DOE might most effectively help reduce the environmental liability that the remaining contaminated excess facilities pose. Also, DOE faces barriers, such as the availability of funding and contracting mechanisms, that affect its ability to deactivate and decommission facilities. Fully incorporating key practices, such as defining strategies to mitigate barriers, may help ensure that DOE understands and communicates what DOE is trying to achieve, how DOE will achieve it, and barriers limiting DOE's ability to do so.