The Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility (WESF) provides safe and compliant underwater storage for 1,936 highly radioactive capsules containing the elements cesium and strontium. In the 1970s, cesium and strontium were removed from waste tanks at Hanford to reduce the temperature of the waste inside the tanks. Both elements were ultimately placed in sturdy, stainless steel containers at WESF for safe storage and monitoring.

Mission
The Department of Energy (DOE) and CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company (CHPRC) are committed to safely storing the capsules until they can be removed for interim and final placement. While the capsules are currently in a safe configuration, WESF is an aging facility. Dry storage would eliminate the possibility of a release of radioactive material in the unlikely event of a major earthquake that might result in loss of pool storage water, and overheating and breach of the capsules. CHPRC is in the process of planning for moving the capsules to dry storage for safer interim storage, allowing for the eventual deactivation of WESF.

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Conceptual illustrations of a large concrete cask (left) were designed to hold capsules. Between 16 and 20 casks will be placed in a safe, compliant configuration in an outdoor storage area (right), similar to how spent commercial nuclear fuel is currently stored.